

OPTIMIZING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR THE MARKETING OF SMES PRODUCTS AT AL-FATIMAH ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL BOJONEGORO

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ABSTRACT

Facing advancements in the digital era, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) need to keep up with technological developments to remain competitive in the marketing world. Social media is one of the platforms that can be effectively utilized to digitally market products, making them accessible to a wider audience. The marketing of products from Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro SMEs has not fully utilized social media. This article aims to propose optimal social media strategies for marketing SMEs products at Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro. The research approach used is qualitative research with a case study method. Data is obtained through interviews with the managers of SMEs at Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School, observation of the marketing activities already carried out, and an analysis of literature related to marketing through social media. The results of this research offer a solution by optimizing social media to enhance the marketing of SMEs products at Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro. Practical recommendations are also provided regarding the use of specific social media platforms and promotional methods that can be implemented to expand product marketing.

Keywords: Social Media; Digital Marketing; MSMEs.

PRELIMINARY

The significant changes brought about by the advancement of technology in human interactions today are primarily characterized by the growth of online social networks, as indicated by the presence of social media (Ngafifi, 2014). Social media applications have become an integral part of daily life (Hendri et al., 2019). Therefore, social media applications are one of the most efficient and influential implications involved in most aspects of society's life, such as social, commercial, political, educational, and economic aspects (Amin et al., 2021). Marketing has become a fundamental activity that every goods and services entrepreneur needs to engage in to sustain their business (Veranita et al., 2022). The emergence of social media as a marketing tool has transformed the way businesses interact with customers, making it easier for customers to engage and communicate, especially for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro is one of the unique pesantrens (Islamic boarding schools) with multiple facets. Besides being an educational and religious institution, this pesantren also serves as the foundation for SMEs products. Within its premises, various household products are produced, and these products have the potential to grow and compete in a broader market to contribute to the sustainability of the pesantren. In today's highly competitive environment, the ability to reach a wide market, build a strong brand, and retain customers poses a challenge for SMEs product sales (Purwanto et al., 2022)

. This is where social media marketing becomes essential, not only as a cost-effective marketing tool but also to enhance product recognition for wider reach, customer retention, and increased sales.

Optimizing products through social media marketing has a significant impact on product marketing and promotion. It involves creating graphic designs, logos/brands, and understanding the importance of product branding. Optimization through social media is the right means to boost product marketing (Kumala & SWW, 2022). The creation of logos/brands contributes to increased product recognition with a broader reach.

Optimizing social media involves three key aspects: creating social media accounts, crafting visually appealing content, and developing narrative content (Anggraini et al., 2022). By implementing these three elements, it is also possible to enhance the image of the educational institution (Falah & Setiawan, 2022). This optimization through social media can facilitate information accessibility, making it easier for the public to obtain information related to the educational institution.

An analysis of the impact of social media marketing on online product purchase intention reveals that social media marketing has a positive and significant influence (Jati & Yuliansyah, 2017). As entrepreneurs in SMEs, social media can be utilized to increase brand awareness (Amin et al., 2021). Brand equity has a positive impact on boosting public purchasing interest.

Based on the aforementioned issues, this research aims to provide solutions regarding effective strategies and optimization of the use of social media platforms for the SMEs products of Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro. The marketing strategy for SMEs products at Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School, utilizing social media as a promotional and developmental tool, will result in increased awareness among the wider community if Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro offers SMEs products of value. This will also contribute to enhancing the image of Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach. Qualitative research involves the collection of data in a naturalistic manner because the researcher is naturally interested in interpreting a phenomenon that occurs (Subandi, 2011). The reason for using the qualitative method of a case study is the need to address issues related to the marketing of SMEs products conducted at Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro. Qualitative research with a case study approach is an empirical study that investigates

contemporary phenomena in a real-life context (Nur'aini, 2020). Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School is chosen as the research location due to its success in creating SMEs products, primarily as an educational institution. Data collection techniques are derived from primary data sources through observation activities and interviews with the managers of SMEs within the pesantren and consumers of the products as informants. The selection of these informants is based on their deep understanding of the SMEs marketing system implemented by the product managers, as well as their ability to provide specific information regarding the marketing of SMEs products. Likewise, the consumer informants will provide insights into how the products or services are received by consumers.

The results obtained from observations and interviews regarding marketing activities will be analyzed in conjunction with literature related to social media marketing. The data analysis technique employed in this research is the Miles and Huberman data analysis technique, which encompasses (1) understanding the meaning of data analysis, (2) analyzing data during data collection, (3) data reduction, (4) data presentation, and (5) drawing conclusions and verification (Rijali, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results indicate the need for an evaluation or information dissemination regarding the extent of the marketing efforts that have been conducted and achieved. This information can serve as a basis for considering the next steps to further optimize the marketing of SMEs products operating at Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro.

Data collected from observations and interviews provide a clear picture of the efforts that have been made in implementing the marketing of SMEs products. The identified problem faced by SMEs managers is that they have not been utilizing social media platforms as a means of marketing or promoting their products. This is primarily due to a significant constraint, which is a lack of knowledge in effectively managing social media.

In optimizing marketing and promotion through social media, managers can enhance their understanding of social media performance by conducting more in-depth analyses. This will help in comprehending the contribution of social media to sales. By using social media, they can reach a broader consumer base, not only within the immediate vicinity of the pesantren but also from various regions. To effectively utilize the marketing of SMEs products, several factors need to be considered, such as identifying the social media platforms to be used, types of advertising/marketing, interaction with consumers, and sales enhancement.

Currently, Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro conducts product marketing solely through dissemination within WhatsApp groups for parents of students. As a result, consumers who are familiar with SMEs products are limited to the pesantren community, including the parents of students and the students themselves. Therefore, there is a need to expand the market by promoting products through social media platforms that are not limited by geographical location.

Here are the implications of the findings above and insights into the optimization strategy and promotional methods using social media to enhance the marketing of SMEs products at Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro.

Optimization strategy and promotional methods that can be implemented through social media to enhance the marketing of SMEs products at Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro include selecting the right platform. Choosing the appropriate platform has a positive and significant impact on promotions. This is because, according to the We Are Social report, there were 167 million active social media users in Indonesia as of January 2023, equivalent to 60.4% of the country's population (Widi, 2023). Currently, the platforms that are widely discussed and used by the general public are Instagram and TikTok. Instagram boasts 1.28 billion active users (Ahlgren, 2023), while TikTok has 112.97 million active users (Annur, 2023). Using platforms like Instagram and TikTok offers numerous advantages, especially the ability to create business accounts, which facilitates the promotion and marketing of MSME products. Therefore, selecting the social media platform that is relevant to the target audience is one of the right steps for optimizing product marketing.

Continuous training is also essential, ensuring that the team responsible for social media receives ongoing training and updates on the latest developments in social media. This will help them stay competent and creative in marketing strategies (Sari et al., 2022). Collaboration with local communities is another strategy, actively engaging with local communities on social media and joining local groups to participate in online community events to build closer relationships with potential customers in the vicinity of Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School.

Furthermore, creating visually appealing content is essential. When creating content, it must be engaging, as it can increase consumer interest in exploring your account and being interested in purchasing SMEs products. The content you create should include visually appealing elements that need to be developed and enhanced to promote creativity, ensuring that consumers do not get bored when browsing your account. Engaging ideas are crucial in content creation to maintain consumer interest and attention. Through available platforms like

Instagram and TikTok, you can easily create compelling content by leveraging current content trends that are popular and ongoing, as this can enhance consumer appeal.

When uploading visual content that has been created, consider using paid advertising. If possible, allocate a budget for paid advertising on the most effective social media platform. Paid advertising can help you reach a larger and more targeted audience.

After creating and uploading engaging content on social media, it will generate interactions and responses from customers through the enabled comment section. Through the available comment section, customers can inquire about the featured products. By responding to customer comments and engaging in two-way communication, you can provide positive feedback to customers, address their curiosity about the products being showcased, and build trust in the SMEs products being marketed. Additionally, social media platforms offer a direct messaging feature. Customers who want to know more about product specifications or other details can send messages through this feature. SMEs operators should always prioritize two-way communication to make customers feel valued.

After interactions and responses from customers, there will be an increase in brand awareness for the SMEs being operated. Enhancing brand awareness is a primary goal in marketing. In this regard, it is essential to have a product brand to make SMEs products more easily recognizable. When creating a brand, consistency is necessary, and there should be a strong aesthetic value. The created brand should also have a clear message or meaning, helping establish a brand identity that is easily remembered by customers. Additionally, a brand can provide legal protection for the uniqueness of an SMEs product. Through the efforts made in social media marketing, SMEs have successfully increased brand awareness for their products. Customers are now aware and informed that there are SMEs products being promoted through social media.

CONCLUSION

The optimization of social media for marketing SMEs at Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro is achieved through the smart and strategic use of social media, which can be a powerful tool for marketing and increasing the visibility of SMEs products while also connecting more closely with relevant consumers. The solutions to be implemented include the selection of social media platforms, continuous training for managers, the creation of visually appealing content accompanied by paid advertising, collaboration with local communities, and active interaction with consumers. With the consistent implementation of social media optimization for SMEs at Al-Fatimah Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro, it

can lead to the growth of MSMEs and an increase in the reach of promotional efforts related to the sale of the offered products.

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