

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN VERTUE HOTEL

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Abstract

This research analyzes the implementation of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) at Hotel Vertu Harmoni Jakarta, which plays an important role in supporting its brand image as a premium business hotel amidst intense competition. Using a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method, this research is based on Kotler and Keller's IMC concept, Karl Weick's organizational information theory, and the macro communication model. The results show that the hotel successfully combines all eight IMC elements, including advertising, sales promotion, public relations, social media marketing, and personal selling, which are implemented effectively. Social media became the primary tool for communicating with the target audience through interesting content that increased engagement and strengthened the hotel's image. Consistency of messages across various media is maintained with integrated collaboration between the marketing team and other departments, which is key to an effective strategy in supporting and strengthening the brand image of Hotel Vertu Harmoni Jakarta.

Keywords: IMC, Brand Image, Hotel Vertu Harmoni Jakarta, Organizational information theory

Introduction

The tourism industry, particularly the hospitality business, plays an important role in the country's economic growth. Hotel is a building that is operated commercially with the aim of offering facilities such as accommodation services to the public by buying them according to the regulations of each hotel (Rachmadizal et al., 2022).

On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the sector, causing a sharp decline in hotel occupancy rates and the closure of many hospitality businesses. Nonetheless, the industry began to show signs of recovery in 2023, with an increase in the number of tourists and hotel occupancy. One region that has seen a resurgence is Jakarta, which has become an important tourist destination and MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Conference, Exhibition) destination.

Amid increasing competition in the hospitality industry, having a strong brand image is crucial. Based on information obtained from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2023 published by Databoks, Indonesia has 29,005 hotels, 4,129 of which are star hotels and 24,876 non-star hotels or other accommodations and the DKI Jakarta area alone has 870 hotels (Muhamad, 2023). The latest data on new property development in DKI Jakarta from Colliers shows that, in the fourth quarter of 2023, there were several new hotel developments in the Central Jakarta area, including Ibis Raden Saleh, Sam Ratulangi Menteng Boutique Hotel, BW Express Hotel Tanah Abang, Park Royal Hotel and Movenpick Jakarta Pecenongan. In the face of this increasingly fierce competition, hospitality businesses need to develop effective differentiation strategies.

Brand image is a series of expectations and intangible values created in the minds of customers through all marketing communications and other things related to the company or a product experienced

by customers (Pickton & Broderick, 2005). One strategy to create a brand image is through marketing activities.

Marketing communication is an important aspect in organizations, especially in the service-oriented hospitality industry. Marketing is a series of actions that companies and organizations take to transmit value or exchange with the company's customers. Combined, marketing communication includes all components of the brand marketing mix and accommodates exchanges by conveying meaning to customers or clients (AShimp, 2003).

The implementation of a single marketing strategy in the global era as well as the dynamic scope of the hospitality business makes the importance of implementing IMC even more pronounced because one marketing tool such as advertising is no longer sufficient to achieve marketing communication objectives by itself and needs to be combined with other tools to create synergy (Rehman et al., 2022)

Integrated Marketing Communication is a procedure that involves the management and organization of all 'agents' which in this case are individuals or organizations into the analysis, design, implementation, and regulation of all marketing communication contacts, media, messages, and promotional tools focused on selected target audiences in a way that allows the improvement and coherence of marketing communication efforts to achieve communication objectives (Pickton & Broderick, 2005)

In its implementation, the application of integrated marketing communication as a marketing strategy involves a series of processes to create, convey, and inform the value of the organization to customers and aims to manage customer relationships in a way that benefits the organization and related stakeholders. It involves synergy and support from various internal stakeholders of the organization for the success of marketing communication planning. Without the appropriate level of organizational support and resources, no marketing plan can succeed (Kotler & Keller, 2016)

Based on Karl Weick's organizational information theory, information communication which is a vital part in determining organizational success (West et al., 2010). However, every organization and individual in it also receives a lot of information (stimuli) from the environment. This happens because organizations and their environments change so rapidly every day that it is unrealistic to show their current condition, because that is not what will happen in the future.

As an organizational information theory developed by Karl Weick, it focuses on the process of organizing group members to manage information through communication, not just organizational structure. This theory has three main assumptions including, 1) Individuals organized in an organization are in the context of an information environment. 2) Any information received by the organization has varying degrees of vagueness. 3) Human organizations participate in the information processing process to shrink the level of vagueness of the information received (West et al., 2010).

The assumptions of organizational information theory are relevant in the context of integrated marketing communications, as it involves managing information from various departments to reduce equivocality. Effective communication planning, including the stages of IMC implementation, is important to achieve communication effectiveness in organizations.

Marketing communication is an important aspect in organizations, especially in the service-oriented hospitality industry. Marketing involves not only external communication to customers, but also internal communication to ensure all members of the organization understand and apply appropriate marketing principles. In this context, Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) becomes a key strategy that combines external, internal, and interactive aspects of marketing.

According to Kotler & Keller (2016), the components of integrated marketing communication include eight elements:

- 1) Advertising: Paid non-personal communication through mass media to influence audiences.
- 2) Sales Promotion: Short-term incentives to encourage specific purchases or actions.
- 3) Event and Experience: Programs designed to create brand-related interactions with consumers.
- 4) Public Relations and Publicity: Efforts to build a positive relationship between an organization and its public.
- 5) Online and Social Media Marketing: Marketing through digital platforms and social media.
- 6) Mobile Marketing: Marketing communication through mobile devices.
- 7) Direct and Database Marketing: Direct communication with customers using collected data.
- 8) Personal Selling: Direct interaction with potential buyers to present, answer questions, and place orders.

There are several stages of IMC planning which consist of six steps (Belch & Belch, 2005):

- 1) Review of the marketing plan
- 2) Analysis of the promotional program situation (internal and external)
- 3) Analysis of the communication process
- 4) Budget determination
- 5) IMC program development
- 6) Supervision, evaluation, and control

This research aims to explore how Integrated Marketing Communication is implemented and how Hotel Vertu Harmoni Jakarta navigates Integrated Marketing Communication tools in their efforts to support brand image in the minds of target consumers in the midst of growing hospitality business competition.

Research Objective (s)

This study aims to understand the implementation of Integrated Marketing Communication in supporting the brand image of Vertu Harmoni Jakarta Hotel. Specifically, it seeks to analyze how different IMC components are coordinated to create a cohesive brand perception among target audiences. By examining the strategies and effectiveness of IMC practices, this research intends to provide insights into the role of integrated communication efforts in strengthening the hotel's brand image within a competitive market.

Literature Review

In the marketing communications literature, Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is recognized as a strategic approach that brings together various communication elements to create a consistent message and strengthen brand image. IMC includes the integration of advertising, public relations, promotions, and other communication channels to support brand image in the eyes of consumers. The constructivism paradigm in the context of IMC emphasizes that brand image is not simply the result of one-way communication efforts, but rather the result of social construction influenced by interactions between companies, consumers, and the media. In this framework, brand image is formed dynamically, where the audience plays a role in shaping perceptions which are then adjusted to the goals and identity that the company wants to communicate.

Previous research has mostly focused on the basic concepts of IMC and brand image and their

effects on consumer loyalty or market conception. This can be seen from the research conducted by Rizaldi (2023) who implemented the IMC concept in building Gudang Garam Filter's brand image and sponsorship collaboration with Persib, where it seems contradictory because cigarette brands that are not good for health should not be involved with sports clubs. In Sahara (2023), the IMC concept in building brand image creates a good relationship with the media. This is as well supported by the credibility of the company, sufficient facilities and infrastructure, and the right workforce. Whereas Ritonga et al. (2022) research used IMC concept for brand awareness in marketing communication strategy, this research tries the same concept to build brand image of Vertu Hotel Jakarta.

With the adoption of the constructivism paradigm, this research seeks to fill the gap in the literature by analyzing how IMC is not only used as an effective marketing communication tool, but also as a means to build and maintain brand image through a process of social construction. IMC in this perspective is not only viewed as a series of promotional activities, but rather as a strategic process that adjusts and reflects brand identity according to consumer responses and their interactions with the resulting communication content. The use of this approach is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how IMC implementation can influence and shape consumer perceptions in a sustainable manner.

Therefore, this research will not only focus on analyzing the effectiveness of IMC, but will also highlight the process in which brand image is formed through the interaction between the company and its audience. The results of this study are expected to make a theoretical contribution in enriching the IMC and brand image literature, especially in the context of using the constructivism paradigm that emphasizes the interactive and dynamic aspects of brand image formation.

Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. According to Creswell, (2018) a case study is a qualitative research method in which researchers thoroughly investigate one or more individuals, such as programs, events, activities, processes, or one or more individuals and a type of qualitative descriptive research to explore the implementation of Vertu Harmoni Hotel Jakarta's Integrated Marketing Communication strategy in supporting brand image.

The determination of informants was carried out through purposive sampling and snowball sampling, with the main informant being the Assistant Director of Marketing and Branding and the supporting informant being the Senior Sales Corporate Manager, then followed by additional informants, the informants were selected based on certain criteria. The three informants are individuals who have an income, know Vertu Harmoni Jakarta from the communication media, and understand the world of hospitality. The selection of informants with these criteria is expected to provide an accurate and relevant picture of Vertu Harmoni Jakarta's brand image.

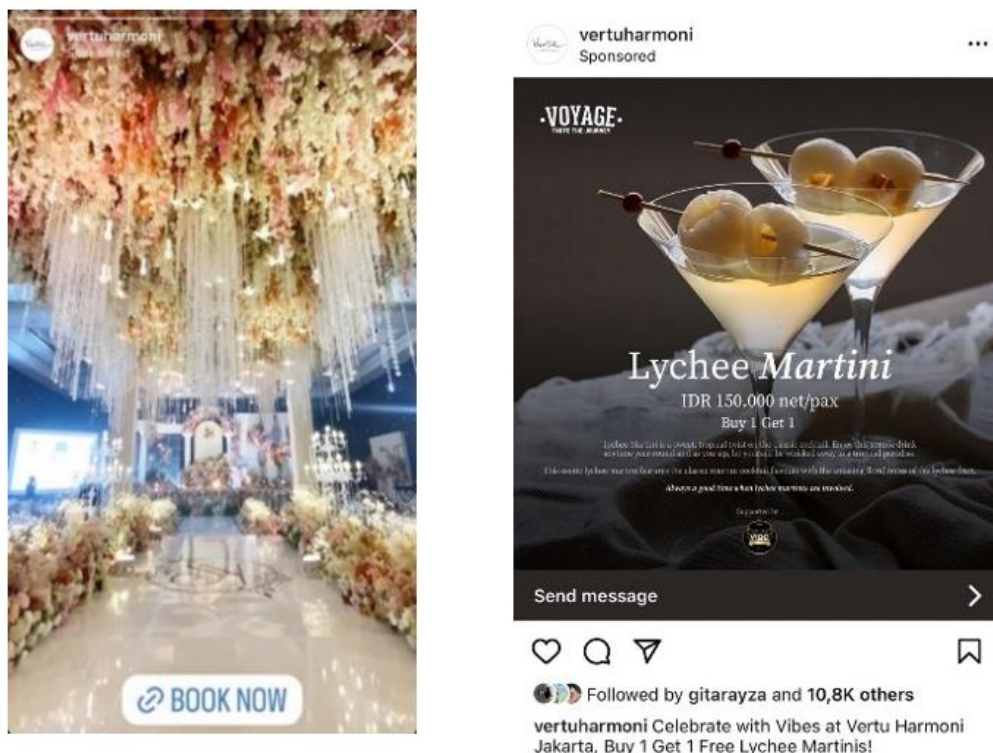
Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through three stages: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, triangulation of data sources, creation of a comprehensive picture of the findings, careful recording of the research process, and checking transcripts to avoid errors were used.

This method is designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study, allowing the researcher to comprehensively extract information from stakeholders involved in designing and implementing the marketing strategy of Hotel Vertu Harmoni Jakarta.

Results

Advertising Vertu Harmoni Hotel Jakarta predominantly uses digital channels for advertising,

such as ads on social media, Google Ads, and promotional content on the hotel website. This is in accordance with the key informant's statement " Actually, Vertu Harmoni Jakarta itself does more online advertising because our market segmentation is more active online. In the digital era, it's really important, in my opinion, to have online visibility, especially with the increasing growth of competitors, especially in this area." said Roman Soleh, Assistant Director of Marketing and Branding. This statement emphasizes the importance of a strong online presence to compete in an increasingly competitive market.



Picture 1: Vertu Harmoni Jakarta Sponsored Advertisement

Source: Researcher Document

The hotel also does print advertising in magazines to strengthen its presence and brand image among certain readers. One example is the placement of advertisements in Asia Dream Magazine, which is a media with a target market of luxury and high-end. This combination of digital and print advertising reflects a comprehensive IMC approach, allowing the hotel to reach various market segments through different channels.

Sales Promotion at Vertu Harmoni Jakarta is done through cross-departmental collaboration to produce attractive packages. The process of creating promotions starts from idea generation, market and cost analysis, to marketing collateral creation. "In every room promotion or F&B promotion or social events such as weddings and birthdays, we discuss first, we invite other departments such as revenue and sales to provide ideas, and usually each head of department sales and revenue will also provide input or their analysis from the revenue and sales side..." said Roman Soleh. This collaborative approach ensures that the promotions are not only attractive to consumers, but also profitable from a business perspective.

Hotels also take advantage of special occasions to create unique promotions. For example,

when hosting the Miss Mega Bintang 2024 event, the hotel offered exclusive room packages related to the event. This strategy demonstrates the hotel's flexibility in responding to market opportunities and creating added value for guests.



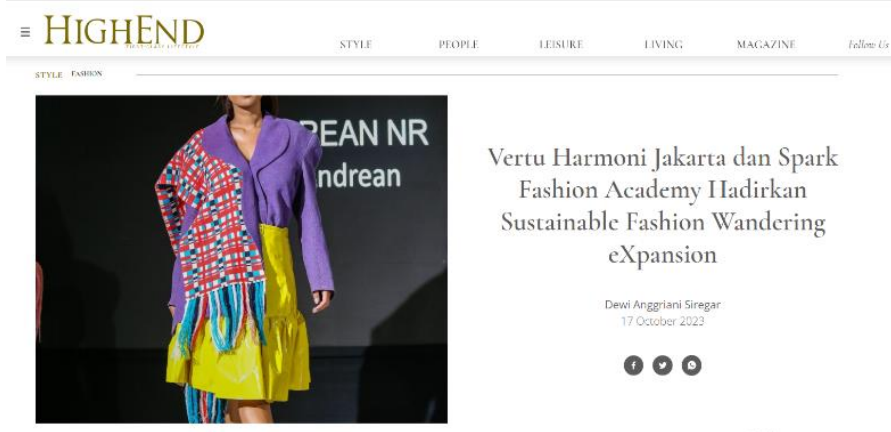
Picture 2: Promotional e-Flyer Vertu Harmoni Jakarta

Source: Researcher Document

Personal Selling The sales team proactively approaches companies, travel agents, and corporate and government clients to offer attractive packages. Telemarketing is also still practiced to contact new and existing clients. “Telemarketing is mandatory because the focus is to approach clients that I may not have contacted for a long time or new accounts that I have just acquired and have never met in person. I usually introduce myself, the property, and the location of the property, then offer if they are interested in doing a visit, and so on.” Said Cut Nuriza, Senior Sales Corporate Manager.

This personal selling strategy allows the hotel to build a more personalized relationship with potential clients. The sales team also uses a bundling strategy, where meeting room bookings are linked to room bookings. This strategy not only increases room sales, but also maximizes the use of hotel facilities.

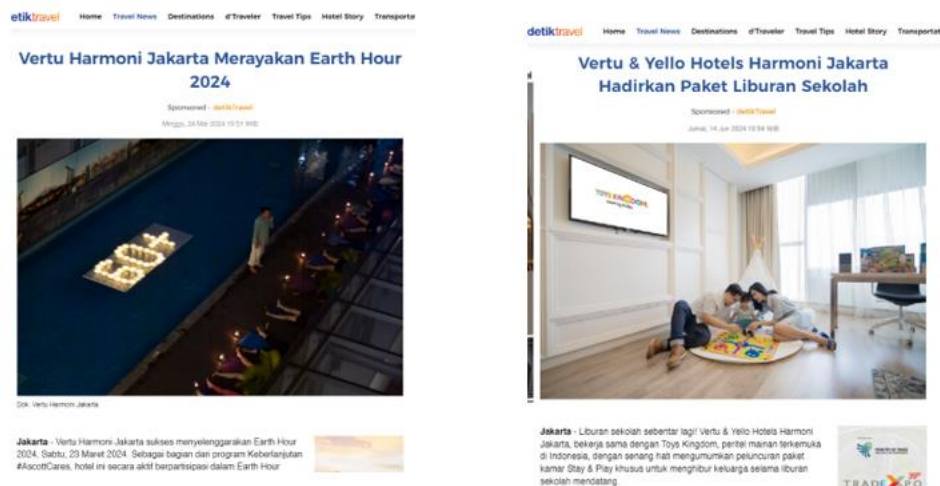
Event and Experiences Hotel actively organizes various events according to brand passion, namely fashion and jazz. Some of the events that have been carried out include fashion shows, sustainable fashion talk shows, and being the official hotel partner of the Miss Mega Bintang event. “At Vertu Harmoni Jakarta, we have indeed done various events, maybe to share a little Vertu Harmoni Jakarta is a brand of The Ascott Limited where the brand is Vertu Hotels. Where the brand passion that we have is fashion and jazz and the events that we do are around those two things.” Roman Soleh said. This approach allows the hotel to create unique experiences for guests and strengthen brand positioning. One event that stands out is the collaboration with SFA Academy in celebration of the institution's 10th anniversary.



Picture 3: SFA Academy Collaboration Event Publication with Vertu Harmoni Jakarta
Source: Researcher Document

Public Relations and Publicity PR activities focus on gaining media coverage to gain exposure and awareness. The marketing team also helps craft responses to guest complaints and collaborates with relevant departments to handle crises. “We work with guest experience to respond by trying to create an apology sentence, or an explanation, or we investigate what happened before we tell the guest,” said Roman Soleh.

Hotels are also active in writing and distributing press releases. The strategy used is to create a unique angle to stand out among the many press releases received by the media. This approach shows the hotel's creativity in creating effective publicity.



Picture 4: Press Release Vertu Harmoni Jakarta on Detiktravel.com
Source: Researcher Document

Online and Social Media Marketing Instagram was the main platform with content introducing the hotel's facilities, activities and unique experiences. Facebook and LinkedIn are also used for different purposes. The hotel also collaborates with influencers to increase reach. “I think it's really important to have visibility online nowadays, especially since everyone has gone online, one of which is by having a social media account. For Vertu Harmon Jakarta, we utilize Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, but we mainly use Instagram...” said Roman Soleh.



Picture 5: Vertu Harmoni Jakarta Instagram Post

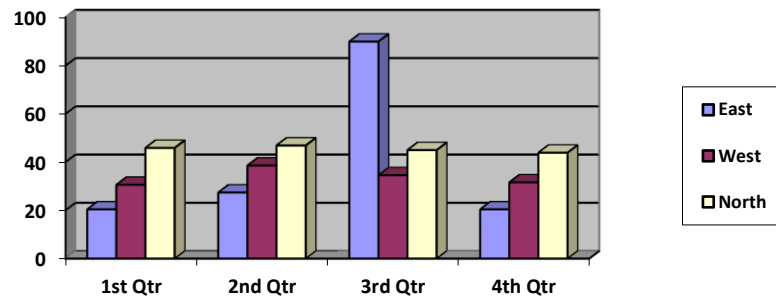
Source: Researcher Document

The hotel also pays attention to the quality of the content produced, by using in-house content creators who use various tools to create interesting and professional content. Collaboration with influencers such as Rendy Kjaernett and Bunga Jelitha who have hundreds of thousands of followers shows the hotel's efforts to expand reach and increase brand credibility.

Mobile Marketing Hotel supports The Ascott Limited's Ascott Star Rewards (ASR) app. Although control of the app is at the head office, hotel employees actively promote ASR membership to guests. "We don't have full control of the app, because the ASR app is from HQ. But for ASR member enrollment, we actively offer it to guests where we explain the benefits that will be given and received by guests..." (Roman Soleh). This strategy shows good mobile marketing integration between the hotel and the parent company. In the era of increasingly competitive business development, companies need to design appropriate reward schemes for their customers, and this can be created through loyalty programs. This kind of initiative has proven to be effective in maintaining relationships with consumers, increasing their satisfaction levels, and preventing customers from switching to competitors who offer different incentives (Sari, 2009).

Direct and Database Marketing The hotel has not done email marketing because it considers communication through social media more effective. However, the media database is used to send press releases. "We don't use email marketing because we think delivering messages through social media is more effective. The marketing channels that we currently use are effective for communicating with guests." Roman Soleh said. Although the hotel does not use email marketing, the use of databases for PR activities shows that the hotel understands the importance of data management in marketing communication strategies.

The Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) planning process is an important aspect of a comprehensive marketing strategy. Good planning not only helps ensure the consistency of messages delivered to target audiences but also maximizes the effectiveness of the various communication channels used. At Vertu Harmoni Jakarta, IMC implementation involves a series of stages.



Picture 1: Picture/ Graph title

Source: (if available)

Discussion

The Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) planning process is an important aspect of a comprehensive marketing strategy. Good planning not only helps ensure the consistency of messages delivered to target audiences but also maximizes the effectiveness of the various communication channels used. At Vertu Harmoni Jakarta, IMC implementation involves a series of stages.

1) Searching for Ideas

The first stage to implement integrated marketing communication at Vertu Harmoni Jakarta is the search for ideas or ideas related to what kind of communication you want to distribute to the target audience. As for example in the making of promos that have been explained in the research results section that the making of promos begins with brainstorming with all heads of departments about what promos they want to make. Likewise, in creating content for Vertu Harmoni Jakarta's communication media, the initial stage begins with looking for content ideas on various platforms to get inspiration.

2) Situation Analysis

After finding the idea of the message to be distributed to the target audience, the revenue, sales, and marketing departments of Vertu Harmoni Jakarta will conduct a market analysis, cost analysis, and competitive analysis with competing hotels.

3) Budgeting

To ensure the cost efficiency and success of the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) campaign, the next step is to set the right budget. This process involves calculating costs for marketing elements that will be used. The finance department together with the marketing team will review the required budget and align it with the targets to be achieved.

4) Message Material Development

Once the budget is set, the next stage is the development or creation of message materials. The message must be tailored to the target audience and reflect the values and excellence of Vertu Harmoni Jakarta. The marketing team will design interesting and relevant content, be it for social media, advertising, or other promotional materials.

5) Implementation of IMC Elements

Implementation of IMC elements is done when all planning elements are ready. The marketing team will upload content, advertising, or other promotional content that has been designed according to a predetermined schedule. This implementation involves

coordination between various departments to ensure the campaign elements run properly and as planned.

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is an important pillar that strengthens Vertu Harmoni Jakarta's brand image as a business hotel in Jakarta's hospitality industry. By utilizing various marketing channels such as social media, advertisement, events, and collaboration with influencers and media, IMC supports Vertu Harmoni Jakarta in building a strong and relevant image in the hospitality market. In addition, the IMC approach also ensures that every interaction with customers, whether through promotions, services, or in-hotel experiences, is in line with Vertu Harmoni Jakarta's brand values and identity.

The distribution of IMC messages carried out at this hotel also considers the values espoused by Vertu Harmoni Jakarta. This is so that every message delivered to the target audience is not only consistent in tone and content, but also accurately reflects the identity and commitment of Vertu Harmoni Jakarta.

The brand image that is expected to be built in the eyes of the public regarding this hotel is Vertu Harmoni Jakarta as a premium business hotel. Some informants' views highlighted overall that Vertu Harmoni Jakarta has shown premium elements through the concept of art and fashion, strategic location, service, and the appearance of its main communication tool, Instagram.

Organizational information theory states that every individual in an organization is in an information environment, and every individual participates in information management.

As a hotel, Vertu Harmoni Jakarta certainly has a complex and integrated organizational structure. This structure is very important in developing and implementing various strategies, one of which is to create effective marketing communications.

In the context of Vertu Harmoni Jakarta, the hotel receives a lot of information from the external and internal environment. This information comes from various sources such as hotel guests or internal departments. Every day, key informants communicate with individuals from different departments and are exposed to a variety of messages to be conveyed through marketing channels. This makes equivocality more vulnerable.

In an informational environment, miscommunication is sometimes inevitable. One form of miscommunication that often occurs is between when an activity involves many departments and outside parties, such as the implementation of events or collaborations with outside parties. Miscommunication occurs with external parties related to the rules and technical use of rooms and meeting rooms for photoshoot needs, because the person in charge of the client is not in place so another employee must be represented. However, the replacement employee concerned did not get info on the adjustment of the rules that had been made between the client and the person in charge.

During the photoshoot activities, the client moved room items that should not be allowed, the use of the meeting room has also exceeded the rental time limit. This led to the replacement employee being reprimanded by the room division who should not have been fully responsible for what happened. The miscommunication above is just a small part of the equivocality that happens every day at Vertu Harmoni Jakarta.

The implementation of organizational information theory is also seen with the implementation of daily HOD (Head of Department) meetings held every morning. In this daily meeting (morning briefing) each head of department communicates what activities will be carried out on that day, guest complaints, competitors, and if there are needs or complaints between departments are also conveyed at the meeting. In line with organizational information theory where each department at Vertu Harmoni Jakarta plays a role in processing information to reduce equivocality. Through daily meetings, all

information from external and internal is conveyed and interpreted in order to produce a clear and unambiguous output.

In the context of IMC, it can also be seen, usually the relevant heads of departments discuss with the marketing team how to process the message they want to convey to the audience. A concrete example is the guest service team wants to show that the service at Vertu Harmoni Jakarta is quality. The marketing team accepts this request and will package it into content for social media because social media is Vertu Harmoni Jakarta's main tool for communication. The content created can also be in the form of videos or photos, one form of content is Instagram post content on June 13, 2024. The content was requested by the guest service team to show how guest satisfaction is Vertu Harmoni Jakarta's priority through service from the heart.

This is in line with organizational information theory, where Vertu Harmoni Jakarta operates in a dynamic information environment, each individual communicates with each other and receives various types of information, including internal to be managed again to become a message that can be conveyed to the target audience.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion, the researcher concluded that Vertu Harmoni Jakarta has successfully utilized various elements of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) in promoting its hotel. The effective use of social media, event marketing, public relations, and other IMC elements has contributed to supporting and strengthening the hotel's brand image in the eyes of consumers. With social media being the main tool used by Vertu Harmoni Jakarta in communicating with the audience, well-packaged and interesting content is created that successfully increases engagement and strengthens the hotel's positive image in the eyes of the hotel's public audience.

Consistency in message delivery through various communication media is very important to maintain a strong brand image. Vertu Harmoni Jakarta ensures that all promotional materials distributed through social media, websites, and events have consistent messages and are aligned with brand values and identity. The implementation of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) at Vertu Harmoni Jakarta shows the importance of integrated collaboration between various parts of the company. Solid cooperation between the marketing team and other departments is key in developing an effective communication strategy. This collaboration ensures that every element of communication, from social media campaigns to direct marketing activities, is aligned and supports the company's overall goals. Through this synergy, Vertu Harmoni Jakarta is able to combine different perspectives and expertise, creating a cohesive message that appeals to the audience.

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