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Social media as a tourism promotion tool: the case of @thelodgemaribaya

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Abstract This research examined how @TheLodgeMaribaya utilized Instagram as a tool for tourism promotion in West Java, Indonesia through the use of AISAS concept (*Attention, Interest, Search, Action, Share*). In the digital era, social media users often seek out 'Instagrammable' locations that capture their *Attention*, spark *Interest*, then lead them to *Search* for further information, prompt them to take *Action* by visiting the location and create content with the location as a background. Lastly, *Share* these experiences on their respective social media accounts. This research aims to find out how The Lodge Maribaya utilized Instagram as a promotional tool employing the AISAS concept, using the case study as a method. The primary data of this research consists of in-depth interviews with The Lodge's Marketing Communications Director, Fauziah Setia Rahayu. The results of the research show that at the *Attention stage*, The Lodge Maribaya focused on environmental education, exploiting trends, and developing market segmentation. At the *Interest stage*, The Lodge Maribaya have used the hashtag (#) feature in the caption for all rides and facilities, allowing them to carry out a recall with the same post with a different perspective. At the *Search stage*, using the hashtag feature makes it easier to search for related information. In the *Action stage*, The Lodge Maribaya employs a positive campaign tagline to attract visitors. Lastly, in the *Share stage*, The Lodge Maribaya encouraged their visitors to share their activities at The Lodge by tagging their official account.

Keywords: promotion; social media; tourism communication

INTRODUCTION

The internet offers one of the greatest psychological experiences. It serves as a psychological space where millions of designs, photos and images are uploaded every day and tested against countless behavioural relationships (Bojic, 2022; Martorell et al., 2024). The rapid development of internet networks has sparked an information revolution in the digital era that is able to transform various aspects of human life, particularly in communication and marketing (Xia et al., 2024). The importance of using social media in various aspects of sales, promotions and politics for companies, marketers and even individuals is not an open secret. For marketing communications practitioners, of course choosing one media is not necessarily sufficient to reach the expected audience (Neilson & Gibson, 2022).

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The availability of various types of media provides more and more choices for every marketing organisation to establish interactive communication with its main stakeholders. On the other hand, marketers face big challenges in integrating various types of communication in order to create clarity and consistency of messages as well as synergy between the media used. The challenges for every marketing company in terms of both goods and services mainly consist of decisions regarding media, tools, and technology that can be utilised in order to manage a complex marketing communications system (Ianenko et al., 2022).

Nowadays, the use of social media especially Instagram as a promotional tool has become a commonplace. The promotions carried out are diverse, including areas such as tourism. As a tourist destination, especially in West Java, Indonesia, The Lodge Maribaya (hereafter it will be written as The Lodge) also uses Instagram as a promotional tool, in addition to other media. The Lodge itself, especially when viewed through its Instagram account, possesses a distinct characteristic that sets it apart as an attraction: NATURE.

As is known, Indonesia is actively developing various stages of tourism campaigns, particularly at the local, regional, national, and international levels by offering various main elements of tourism such as heritage, beaches and sea, culinary, culture and arts as well as special tourism such as ecotourism, shopping tourism, ecosport, MICE, edutourism among others (Kusumastuti et al., 2024).

With the tagline 'Escape to Nature', The Lodge offers a natural mountain view tourism concept that is complete with existing rides. Various forms of rides such as The Lodge Hot Air Balloon, Fun Camp, The Fines (cafe), and Healing Garden are promoted through its Instagram account. This aims to attract the attention of potential consumers or visitors, of course. This is closely related to West Java or especially Bandung, which is renowned for natural tourism, especially mountains. The city of Bandung is famous for its bowl-like shape that is located in the middle with mountains surrounding it. The location of The Lodge is not far from Bandung, specifically in Maribaya, Lembang.

In The Lodge there are several rides that have their own Instagram accounts that are positioned in the main display. The Lodge never forgets to add a hashtag (#) in each caption to make searching easier in the search feature. As of January 19, 2023, The Lodge Instagram account had 74,800 followers with 1,084 contents (See Figure 1).

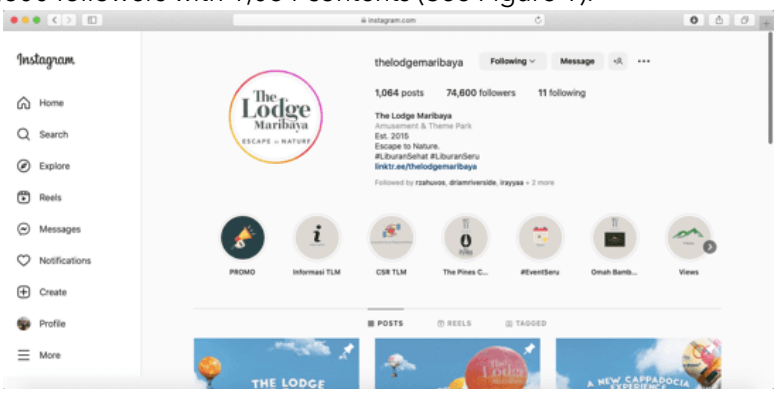

Figure 1. The Lodge Instagram (Maribaya, n.d.)
Source: ([@thelodgemaribaya], 2023)

As previously stated, using social media as a promotional tool is not a new concept. Social media is considered as a means for users to share thoughts, experiences and even views on an event. Thus, it is not surprising that social media users are also consumers who can promote a product, serving as a CGM or consumer generated media (Ghouri et al., 2022; Jeong et al., 2023). The development of communication presents both advantage and challenges for marketers. The advantage is that it can enhance interactions activities between marketers and consumers to a new level of communication through social media platforms widely used by the public. The challenge, however, is how to use social media effectively (Obermayer et al., 2022).

AISAS is a marketing model developed by the advertising agency Dentsu in 2004. The abbreviation AISAS refers to five stages or steps that are considered important in designing marketing messages to achieve effective interaction with consumers (Ding & Wang, 2024). By following the AISAS model, marketers are expected to be able to design more effective and

memorable messages, guiding consumers through a series of stages that lead to the action desired by the marketer (Zhao et al., 2024).

AISAS stands for Attention, Interest, Search, Action, Share. In this digital era almost all social media users tend to look for Instagrammable locations that attract 'Attention', which sparks the users 'Interest', and prompt them to 'Search' for more details. Which then motivates them to take 'Action' to see these target locations and create content featuring these places, then 'Share' it with their followers in their own social media (Li & Pan, 2023).

AISAS here includes how content on The Lodge's Instagram can attract 'Attention' and spark 'Interest' in potential visitors. Visitors can also 'Search' on social media, whether using the hashtag (#) or not, then take 'Action' to come to The Lodge and 'Share' their experiences through their own social media.

Several studies related to promotion using social media and AISAS framework have been carried out before. One research that focuses on social media as a promotional tool is from Hysa et al. (2022) which examines the use of social media in sustainable tourism recovery. The results of this study are that the frequency of social media use decreases with increasing age. The study found that tourists' use of social media during and after trips varies by generation and gender, impacting behaviours such as trip planning, information gathering, and sharing experiences. Women, more than men, use social media to obtain information and share trip impressions, highlighting opportunities for promoting responsible tourism and effective urban management.

The next research is from Kumar et al. (2022) titled 'Analysing tourism destination promotion through Facebook by Destination Marketing Organizations of India'. This research also uses social media and focuses on tourism, drawing on primary data sources as well as interviews. The results obtained are that DMO (Destination Marketing Organisations) use Facebook as a complement to traditional marketing tools and are rarely used for customer service and research. DMO benefits from more interesting content of scenic beauty, culture and cuisine to engage users on Facebook pages. Further, implications for management and managerial action have been suggested.

Next from Yuan et al. (2022), which uses surveys and focuses on social media and tourism. The value obtained is that social media is a powerful tool for tourism development and sustainability in creating smart tourists and destinations throughout the world. In China, the use of social media has driven the development of information and communication technology and tourism. Nunkoo et al. (2023) studied the impacts of social media on residents' attitudes towards tourism. They said that the study conducted was the first to provide the theoretical foundation and conceptual framework needed for studying people's attitudes towards tourism in the increasingly intensive information era with the growth of social media.

Meanwhile, research using the concept of digitalization in marketing communications was carried out by Shankar et al. (2022). This research uses a systematic literature review approach. This review suggests the importance of considering local market effects for implementing marketing communications strategies, especially in the context of co-creation. The current research was conducted in a local context, thereby exploring possible local market effects.

Meanwhile, a research from Brockhaus et al. (2023) studied digitalisation in corporate communications. This study found that the digitalisation of communication activities and infrastructure is widely acknowledged as crucial, however, many communication departments and agencies are still considered as digitally immature, with various dimensions of digitalisation strategies influencing the overall digital maturity of communications.

Additionally, a research specifically regarding Instagram social media as a promotional tool is conducted by Park and Namkung (2022). This study examines the effect of Instagram marketing activities on consumer-based brand equity in the coffee industry. This study uses Instagram as an effective visual marketing medium. This study found that Instagram marketing activities in the form of interaction, entertainment, customisation and trendiness have a positive effect on brand equity and have an impact on loyalty and Instagram re-usage intention towards the brand.

Although, in general, previous research shares similarities with this research, particularly in the field of promotion and tourism using the case study method. The key difference with this research, however, lies in the research object which is The Lodge Maribaya, examined through

its Instagram account @TheLodgeMaribaya. Apart from that, this research uses the AISAS concept (Attention, Interest, Search, Action, Share) which is also used as a guide in conducting interviews.

Several researchers also have used AISAS as the research model. Research conducted by Huang et al. (2024) titled investigating 'Chinese Consumers' Psychology and Behaviour of the Foods With Nutrition Claims'. This research examined how nutrition claims influence Chinese consumers' psychology and behaviour using the AISAS (Attention, Interest, Search, Action, Share) model as our theoretical framework. The results show that younger adults and those with higher incomes showed greater attention to nutrition claims, which led to increased food purchases and information sharing through interest and search behaviour. AISAS in this research was used as a modeland was tested using structural equation modelling by using gender, age, and income as determinants of attention, which then determines peoples' interest, search, action, and share. This study is different from the current research because the current research employed a descriptive qualitative, not inferential quantitative.

Next is from Yuliati and Simanjuntak (2024) titled 'Digital Communication Innovation of Food Waste Using the AISAS Approach: Evidence From Indonesian Adolescents'. This research also used the AISAS as a structural model which was tested quantitatively with attention influencing interest and the other three elements, interest leading to search, action, and share; search impacting action and share; and action leading to share. This study found that attention influences interests and search, interests influence search and action, search influences shares, and action influences shares. Just like the previous research, this research is different from the current research that focused on the qualitative and strategic aspects of AISAS.

In the same manner, a research has been conducted by P. Sharma et al. (2023) that expands the AISAS model to show that digital technology enables non-linear consumer decision journeys. The model tested involves AISAS as a cycle with attention influenced by responsiveness to interactivity and performance expectancy; interest is influenced by perceived usefulness; perceived usefulness and performance expectancy influence attitude towards digital technology and share influences psychological engagement and loyalty. The test results confirmed the entire model.

Zhang and Luo (2024) studied how intellectual property marketing influences consumer shopping psychology through quantitative and empirical analysis. The AISAS model was tested sequentially using structural equation modelling. The results show that the AISAS model is fully valid for explaining the important role of intellectual property content in shaping consumer behaviour. These four studies confirm that AISAS model research tends to be quantitative, indicating that research with a qualitative approach is still rare and provides gaps for current research. Based on the background of the problem stated above, the focus of this research is how @ThelodgeMaribaya in West Java, Indonesia utilized its social media as a tourism promotion tool by employing the AISAS concept.

METHODOLOGY

This study examine how the Instagram account of @ThelodgeMaribaya was used as a tourism promotion tool in West Java, Indonesia employing a case study approach. A case study is a research approach in which the researcher explores a particular phenomenon (case) at a certain time and activity (program, event, process, institution or social group) and collects information using various data collection procedures over a certain period. Case studies are more desirable for tracking contemporary events if the events in question cannot be manipulated (Schritt, 2022).

Case study research focuses intensively on a particular object that is studied as a case. Case study research is intended to intensively study the background of the problem, the situation and position of an event that is currently taking place, as well as the environmental interactions of certain social units that are given. Research subjects can be individuals, groups, institutions, or society. Case study research is an in-depth study of a particular social unit, and the results of this research provide a broad and in-depth picture of a particular social unit. Case studies have the ability to provide a deep understanding of a phenomenon within its real-life context (Amadi, 2023).

AISAS according to Javed et al. (2022) captures the purchase desire resulting mostly from the posts/photos shared by influencers. The AISAS model is considered an innovative framework for marketing communication plans due to its focus on search and sharing mechanisms (Yang et al., 2023). According to Sun et al. (2023), AISAS stands for Attention, Interest, Search, Action and Share. This model is intended as a reflection of the magnitude of the internet's influence on human life today. Search and share activities are important activities for internet users. Search and share are transparent elements, in searching for information in the form of user experience, service level, satisfaction and so on. Everything comes directly from consumers, not from producers. Testimonials and Word of Mouth (WOM) from consumers are the main weapons (Beyari & Garamoun, 2024; I. Sharma et al., 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data gathering for this research took place on 7 August 2023, starting at 14.00, at The Lodge Group Main Office, Jl. Bandung Well No. 6, Bandung, West Java. Direct interview with Mrs. Fauziah Setia Rahayu (Puji), as Director of Marcomm The Lodge Group.

Attention

The Lodge began with a commitment to conserve the environment and then saw business opportunities for expansion, while still maintaining focus on natural beauty and environmental sustainability. The Lodge also continues to keep up with the Instagram trends and then created the account @TheLodgeMaribaya as a promotional tool.

Even though on one hand The Lodge sees business opportunities, it cannot lose sight of its original intention that is to focus on education and environmental preservation as these are integral attributes of The Lodge. For this reason, the authors are exploring alternative ways to capitalise on opportunities without harming nature, such as implementing a trekking program that still prioritises environmental education starting from small things such as proper waste disposal (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. The Lodge (Maribaya, The Lodge Maribaya, n.d.)
Source: Website (Maribaya, 2024)

The Lodge is keen to see what the current trend is to amplify its promotional efforts. Instagram remains itself as a widely used social media platform which is why The Lodge takes advantage of promotional opportunities through it. The Lodge is also keen to see what is trending and then adapts to their needs. When skilled professionals in social media, The Lodge will hire a capable and competent team that can be trusted by the management to do the promotion responsibilities.

There is an opportunity, that's where the segmentation of The Lodge develops. It is not limited to those who like adventure such as camping ground or trekking, but now it has expanded to become all segmented, where all ages can enjoy The Lodge tours. The social media team here seems agile and responsive in responding to questions about The Lodge. They also saw a shift in Instagram account users towards a younger age. Most of today's children have a high curiosity, and The Lodge sees this and is responsive in replying to questions submitted by the audience via DM earlier. The Lodge have identified and analysed external threats utilising

the SWOT analysis framework– Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats. From there it was discovered that this was a result of Instagram's algorithm. The Lodge continues to strive to ensure that their content continues to appear on their followers' homepages, even without the followers needing to log in to their accounts.

After the pandemic, The Lodge continues its efforts to keep the brand recognized by the public and encourage them to visit and repeat their visit. Maintaining a brand is not an easy matter. The Lodge saw an opportunity to promote not only through Instagram (especially after being shadow banned) but also in other media, such as the mass media and even conducting promotions at malls. Another opportunity The Lodge saw is Instagram ads, such as advertising on Instagram, where on the feed or homepage users occasionally appear on The Lodge accounts as advertisements or sponsored content. These ads target both users who are not yet followers of The Lodge's Instagram and even those who are already followers (See Figure 3).

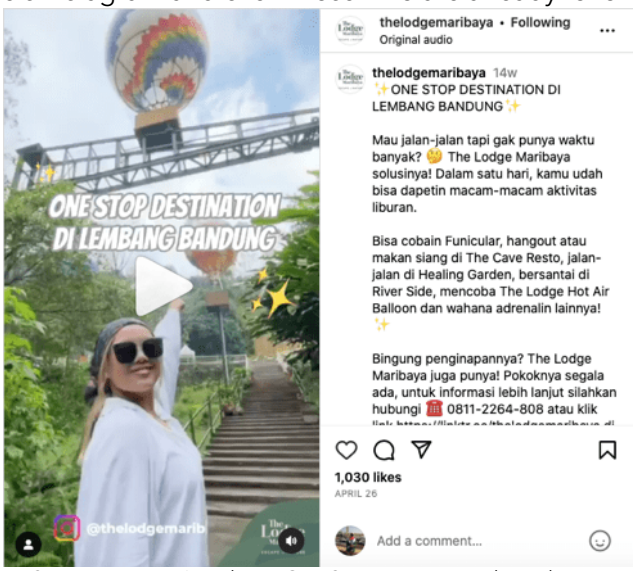

Figure 3. One Stop Destination(Maribaya, One Stop Destination di Lembang Bandung, n.d.)
Source: ([@thelodgemaribaya], 2023)

Post-pandemic, The Lodge adapts to the market needs while it still maintains its distinctive characteristics. The one stop destination concept of The Lodge was inspired by activities that are commonly found in malls. Like malls, The Lodge covers a wide range of audiences (all segmented) not just limited to its initial concept.

Interest

Using hashtags on Instagram or other social media can make content created by users appear in the search feature on Instagram which will automatically lead to contents created by the users. This is one way for users to find their content by other users just by writing it in the search feature. This is limited to non-private user content. Look at the hashtags used by The Lodge's Instagram account, apart from promoting products from The Lodge, it also promotes tourism in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia (See Figure 4 and Figure 5). However, the characteristic of The Lodge sustains its natural tourism image. Wes Anderson, an American director and producer has recently created a trend on Instagram social media. If you search for Wes Anderson-inspired content on Instagram, his content has one distinct characteristic, which is the use of pastel colours (See Figure 6).

By following trends but still maintaining the characteristics or character of The Lodge, The Lodge's Instagram account still has something different from its competitors. In the content of Figure 4, it can be seen that The Lodge still maintains the characteristics of a natural tourist attraction. Figure 4 is taken from the @mulberryhills_bythelodge account, which is a company group associated with The Lodge.

Figure 4. The Lodge content with Hashtag (#)(Maribaya, What's Going On?, n.d.) ([@thelodgemaribaya], 2023)
Source: ([@thelodgemaribaya], 2023)

Figure 5. Wes Anderson Stye in Mulberry Hill by The Lodge(Maribaya, Camping Van, n.d.) ([@thelodgemaribaya], 2023)
Source: ([@thelodgemaribaya], 2023)

The Lodge is currently utilising social media trends for product promotion needs. If people currently prefer Instagram, then that's the platform that they will use. Apart from Instagram, TikTok is also one of the most widely used social media platforms, and The Lodge also uses it for promotional purposes.

Carrying out a recall to the public, especially to The Lodge's followers, to remind them of the products that The Lodge offers is one way for the company to carry out promotions. A recall is one way to ensure that anyone who sees it will remember it for a long time. Some people might feel bored with the repetitive contentsthat appears on their respective Instagram homepages. Creativity is crucially needed here, by creating different packaging for the same content.

Search

Currently, consumers are considered to be more active and can carry out the process of searching for information on the internet, and then sharing their experiences with people around them. This process is called word of mouth (WOM).

In this case, the role of people is very important in promoting services. In other words, the consumer will talk to other potential customers about their experience in receiving the

service so that word of mouth would occur (Kuppelwieser et al., 2022). The WOM carried out by The Lodge through Instagram is an eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth) concept, specifically the dissemination of experiences by consumers themselves through electronic media (Kankhuni & Ngwira, 2022).

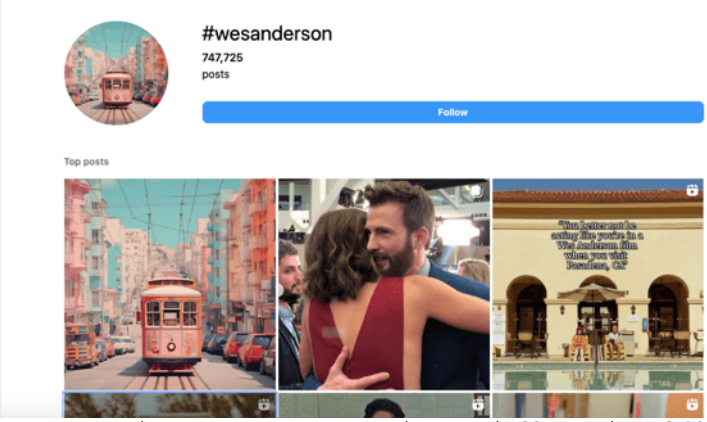

Figure 6. #WesAnderson in Instagram(#WesAnderson, n.d.) ([@wesanderson], 2023)
Source: ([@thelodgemaribaya], 2023)

Hashtags are a way to categorise keywords. By adding the (#) symbol in front of a keyword, managers prompt search engines to display the designated content whenever someone uses the term (Ulloa et al., 2024).

Social media has become one of the most disruptive and impactful new media channels on marketing communications. This is the main reason marketers have more control over their brand communications because consumers now have an equally powerful voice.

Social media has been one of the most disruptive new media channels impacting marketing communications. It's a major cause of marketers having much of their control over their brand communications because consumers now have an equally powerful voice (Saxena et al., 2022). Writing hashtags (#) on each Instagram user's content is very helpful and has given rise to many variations in the share feature on Instagram regarding The Lodge. Writing hashtags accompanied by certain emoticons creates many search variants regarding The Lodge, as in the following Figure 7.

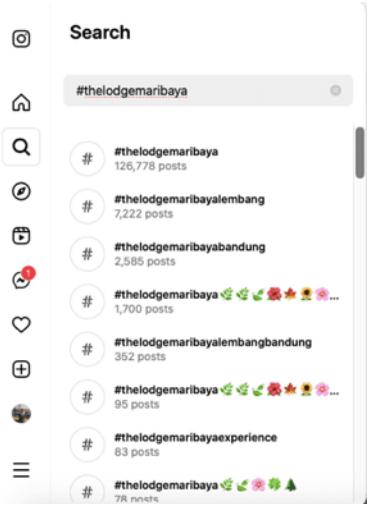

Figure 7.The Lodge in the Search Feature(#thelodgemaribaya, n.d.)
Source: ([@thelodgemaribaya], 2023)

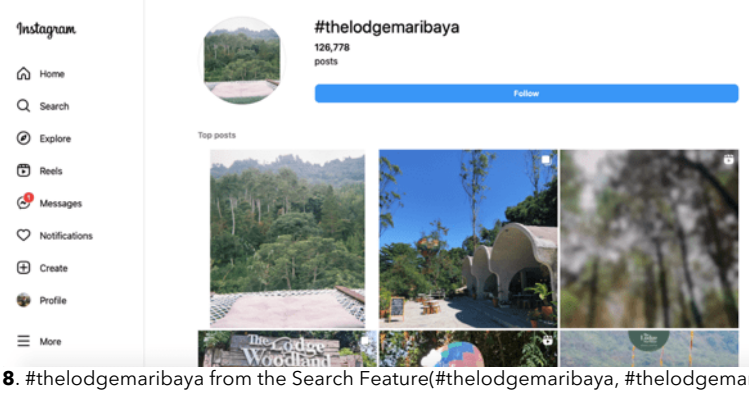

Figure 8. #thelodgemaribaya from the Search Feature(#thelodgemaribaya, #thelodgemaribaya, n.d.)
Source: ([@thelodgemaribaya], 2023)

However, The Lodge still has to prepare itself for all the facilities and comfort that can be obtained by consumers who come to visit The Lodge. This ensures that The Lodge's reputation remains good and does not disappoint visitors who come based on the search feature (Figure 8). The current large number of media (especially online media) related to The Lodge means that The Lodge must always be able to search for information that can then be used as input. This is related to the sustainability of The Lodge itself as a tourism destination in West Java, Indonesia especially in Bandung.

Features on Instagram must be used to the maximum extent possible. Not only that, but the positive campaign tagline also (healthy living after the pandemic) must be easy for the public to remember, and still shows the character of The Lodge; the environmental education..

Share becomes very important when involving consumers or followers on social media to produce content and upload it provides value for them or there has been a word of mouth (WOM) communication (Taufik et al., 2022).

Word of mouth (WOM) communication that occurs naturally is a very effective input in influencing purchasing decisions (Y. Zhang et al., 2022). The most effective information comes from personal sources because personal sources carry out recognition and/or evaluation functions (Hansson & Page, 2022).

Using talent as an attraction for visitors to come is seen as quite effective for The Lodge. This can be seen by visitors from outside the city who come specifically to meet this talent. Reposting user-generated content can also help promote The Lodge, without being asked. This is one of the attractions of The Lodge itself as a brand.

Special shows can attract visitors, especially children. This is one of the products owned by The Lodge. Apart from that, invitations from talent that can encourage visitors to promote their activities are persuasive This threat coming from external means that The Lodge must continue to be creative in creating interesting content to maintain its recognition as a tourist destination in West Java, especially in Bandung.

For promotional needs, The Lodge used Instagram as the main promotional media, in addition to other media such as TikTok, mass media, or collaboration with malls in the city of Bandung. Here, The Lodge sees an opportunity to promote through media which is currently or is still trending among society, especially in Indonesia. Through Instagram The Lodge utilises features such as hashtags to further promote its products.

Utilising existing features is similar to research conducted by Dinda Sekar Puspitarini and Reni Nuraeni, titled *'Pemanfaatan Media Sosial Sebagai Media Promosi (Studi Deskriptif Pada Happy Go Lucky House'*(Utilisation of Social Media as a Promotional Media: A Descriptive Study at Happy Go Lucky House). The results obtained from this research are as follows: Happy Go Lucky House makes good use of Instagram, which can be seen from the very diverse promotional activities carried out and can also take advantage of the various features available (Doyle et al., 2022; Wahid & Gunarto, 2022).

It's not that there are no threats, after the pandemic, the emergence of an algorithm from Instagram caused The Lodge's account to experience a shadow banning. Shadow banning occurs when there are accounts that are considered inactive, which became more common during the pandemic. Here, The Lodge continues to strive to minimise or even eliminate it by continuously creating content to be displayed on The Lodge Group, such as The Lodge

Maribaya, Fairy Garden by The Lodge, Mulberry Hill by The Lodge, and Taman Seribu Cahaya. Continuously introducing the same product but with different packaging makes the public remember that The Lodge tourist attraction was suspended, like several other places, during the pandemic. This effort is also being made so that The Lodge Group account does not experience shadow banning again.

Apart from continuously creating content about products, The Lodge also spreads campaigns with #LiburanSehat #LiburanSeru, where in this campaign The Lodge seeks to instil in the minds of the public that The Lodge offers healthy tourism with natural views, pure air and oxygen, and also sunlight which is of course very healthy. Holidays at The Lodge not only provide excitement like holidays in general, but are also healthy, because they are connected to nature (real, not artificial).

In creating content, The Lodge also follows existing trends, but still maintains its unique environmental education focused character. So, even though they follow trends in content creation, people will still remember that this is a brand and product from The Lodge. So, The Lodge really needs to seek out creative ideas to find more creative solutions for added value for its visitors (Kastenholz & Gronau, 2022).

This research has several important implications in the fields of communication, digital marketing, and tourism development. First, the use of the AISAS concept based on the case study of The Lodge Maribaya provides practical guidance for managers of other tourist destinations who want to maximise the use of social media as a promotional tool. The strategy successfully achieved by The Lodge Maribaya can become a best practice model for effectively increasing awareness, interest and engagement of social media users.

Second, the results of this research also show that the use of specific features such as positive hashtags (#) and campaign taglines can strengthen marketing efforts. Tourist destination managers can take advantage of these features to increase visibility and ease of finding information that can encourage direct visits to locations.

Third, this research emphasises the importance of environmental education and utilising trends in attracting the attention and interest of digital audiences. Good education and following the latest trends can make tourist destinations more relevant and attractive to potential visitors, especially millennials and generation Z who are active on social media.

Fourth, the research results underscores the importance of continuous interaction and engagement with visitors. By inviting visitors to share their experiences via tagging on social media, tourist destinations can gain extensive and authentic organic promotion, which can lead to an increase in new tourist arrivals. This is in line with the phenomenon of user generated content on the internet which explains how audiences produce media content and at the same time distribute and become consumers of that content (Santos, 2022).

Finally, this research enriches the literature on digital marketing strategies and provides useful insights in optimising the potential of social media in the tourism industry. Tourism officials and marketers can use the findings of this research to design digital marketing campaigns that are more effective and relevant to the dynamics of today's digital era.

CONCLUSION

The Lodge utilises Instagram as the main promotional media besides TikTok and other mass media and collaborations. The Lodge also continues to strive to remind the public of its products by continuously introducing The Lodge products, which even though the products are still the same, have different packaging. This is also meant to be due to the algorithm on Instagram's part regarding accounts that are considered empty, especially during the pandemic. The content on The Lodge's Instagram account often follows trends, although this does not eliminate the unique characteristics or character of The Lodge particularly the environmental education focused attribute. The #LiburanSehat and #LiburanSeru campaigns are carried out to encourage people to continue enjoying the excitement at The Lodge which is still healthy because of the clean air and beautiful and natural environment.

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