

BRANDING AND TOURISM IN KOMODO: RAISING RESORT AWARENESS THROUGH INSTAGRAM INFLUENCER

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Abstract

Accommodation's competitiveness around Labuan Bajo currently drives them to strive after the COVID-19 pandemic to offer a variety of promotions on its products and services to increase brand awareness and expected visits to the super-priority destination on Komodo Island, East Nusa Tenggara. The study aims to explore how Mohini Resort Komodo, of accommodation in Labuan Bajo, performed the influencer marketing strategy for raising brand awareness through Instagram influencers in such a challenging situation. This descriptive and qualitative case study used in-depth interviews and observations to gather the idea. From the viewpoint of the two-step flow theory of communication, this study elaborates on how brands in the travel industry can use the influencer marketing framework to interact with Instagram influencers as online opinion leaders. The findings show that the resort has put into practice an influencer marketing strategy that includes 1) identifying the marketing objective, target market, and definition of success; 2) defining the best campaign strategy; 3) outlining the creative, creator, and content strategy; and 4) defining budget, target, and media planning. This research contributes to an ongoing examination of the framework for companies in the tourism industry to enforce effective influencer marketing.

Keywords: brand awareness, influencer marketing, Labuan Bajo, tourism

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of lodgings in the Labuan Bajo area has intensified competition, prompting them to implement diverse product and service marketing to enhance brand recognition amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, expect visits to the super-priority destination on Komodo Island, East Nusa Tenggara, the hidden paradise in eastern Indonesia (Darung et al., 2022). Due to its captivating exoticism, Labuan Bajo has emerged as a highly prioritized tourist attraction, renowned even among international visitors. Tourism has become one of the businesses intensifying its promotion activity on social media and practicing influencer marketing. In a pandemic, digital tourism influencers are unquestionably the key players who can quickly publicize Labuan Bajo attractions (Candraningrum et al., 2022). The growing significance of social media is becoming increasingly apparent in the tourism industry.

Labuan Bajo is in the Komodo District of the West Manggarai Regency within the East Nusa Tenggara Province. The Sape Strait separates it from West Nusa Tenggara and forms a direct border with that region. The total number of tourist visits to Labuan Bajo in 2015 amounted to 27,325 individuals, exhibiting a decline of 2.42% in the subsequent year of 2016. Moreover, there was a further decline in the number of tourist visits in 2017, with a fall of 30.12%. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that there was a substantial surge of 72.43% in tourist visits during the year 2018 (Limengka et al., 2021). One of the main attractions in Labuan Bajo is island-hopping, a tour between islands by lodging on a boat, or daily tours to Komodo Island and Padar Island, which offer extraordinary natural attractions such as beautiful panoramas and amazing coastlines (Jaimun et al., 2020; Putri & Aras, 2021).

Accommodation on the ship requires a minimum of one day of preparation, so a mainland lodging place is needed. Mohini Komodo Resort (Mohini) is one of the several lodging places in Labuan Bajo. The resort has advantageous geographical placement as it is conveniently situated close to public amenities, facilitating access and discoverability. It engages in land and ship lodging in Wae Cicu, Labuan Bajo, West Manggarai, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. The resort is close to Komodo Airport (LBJ), a mere 3.61 km away, and slightly over 3.92 km from Labuan Bajo Port. The name "Mohini" is derived from Hindi (India), and according to Datang et al. (2022), it means "beautiful" and "who charms". The resort's uniqueness is its remarkable bohemian interior and exterior design concept, which resembles barns.

Travelers engaging in tourism activities at certain tourist attractions often consider many factors while deciding to visit. For instance, millennial travelers, now seeing a significant surge in popularity, exemplify this trend. Millennial travelers acquire knowledge through social media platforms before embarking on their journeys to tourist destinations, such as the Labuan Bajo region. Hence, influencer marketing is the current tool for promoting Indonesia's tourism industry and spreading information to companies pursuing customer awareness, trust, and loyalty. Its activities are one of the marketing communications tools used and recommended by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemenparekraf) to promote the tourism industry, an important economic sector, specifically to campaign to brand Labuan Bajo as a super-

premium destination. The trustworthiness of social media influencers has a beneficial influence on the decision-making process of millennial tourists when considering a visit to Labuan Bajo (Limengka et al., 2021).

Influencers could spread the tourism companies' messages to broader consumers who might never be able to reach them (Yetimoğlu & Uğurlu, 2020). Hence, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the resort's Instagram account @mohiniresort has gained more brand awareness, as indicated by the followers' growth in the last three years since it conducts influencer marketing with several public figures, social media personalities, and vloggers. Influencers who stay at the resort create Instagram content to promote it.

Yesiloglu and Costello (2020) stated that, in its most basic form, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) two-step flow of communication theory could explain influencer marketing. It is one of the most well-known social communication, media effects, and personal influences in the past six decades (Hilbert et al., 2016), which explains another reason why businesses across various sectors, including in the hospitality and tourism industries, could enhance the effectiveness of their marketing communications by utilizing influencer resources such as follower networks, personal positioning, communication content, and follower trust (Leung et al., 2022). Before the modern incarnation, scholars studied influencers or key opinion leaders using the theory, which still applies to digital platforms (Hilbert et al., 2016), as shown by influencer marketing, where its activities are a means to encourage the influencer's audience to participate in shared content about travel destinations on social media sites such as Instagram.

However, regardless of the number of marketing professionals who use influencer marketing, they still need a thorough understanding of its scope, efficacy, and potential risks (Leung et al., 2022). The extensive offerings made by influencer agencies need to be clarified or overwhelm many practitioners of travel and tourism marketing communication or public relations (Breves et al., 2019). Stanková and Kuchta (2020) believed that cooperation with an influencer often needs clarification and demands at least some knowledge about the company's possibilities.

Looking at the influencer marketing phenomenon, Levin (2020) proposes four steps in the influencer marketing framework that could fully align with its overall marketing communication plan through extendable media channels. The company first identifies its primary marketing objective, target audience, and definition of success. Then, those identifications become input for platform strategy. The platform strategy later guides creativity, creators, and content. Then, the company finally outlines its budget, goals, and media plan. This four-step process could provide the structure the company needs to turn influencer marketing into a scalable media channel, align stakeholders within the organization, and streamline the campaign planning process.

The travel industry has drawn much attention in prior research as influencer marketing is increasingly becoming customary (Ye et al., 2021). Yudhistira (2018) reported that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on Instagram has a low effect of 20.6% on travelers' decisions to visit Labuan Bajo. However, Candraningrum et al. (2022) argued that Instagram accounts could attract the public's attention and get many followers not only depending on celebrities' endorsers but also from exciting content creators with their valuable communication to the community. This research discovers the influencer

marketing strategy carried out by Mohini in raising brand awareness through the @mohiniresort Instagram account. The presented steps in the study results help marketing communication serve as a guideline for a comprehensible direction for hotel companies in the tourism industry to perform an influencer marketing strategy.

METHODOLOGY

Paradigm is a crucial aspect that can assist in interpreting research results. Bogdan and Bilker (1982) mentioned that a researcher would have some assumptions about a study and concepts that lead to a way of thinking in a study through a paradigm (Moleong, 2018). This research uses the post-positivist paradigm, a development of the positivist paradigm, and a constructivist paradigm that looks directly into the field to see the phenomenon of the problem under it. This positivist post is also due to the desire to test specific theories by collecting data through in-depth interviews and observation through Mohini Resort Komodo's Instagram to support the research.

Qualitative research possesses distinct attributes, as outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2023). He defines qualitative research as an approach employed to delve deeper into and comprehend an existing issue through in-depth interviews, wherein thought-provoking and perceptive questions are posed. The current study uses a descriptive research methodology (Moleong, 2018) to determine the influencer marketing strategy Mohini Resort Komodo uses on Instagram, its primary marketing communication platform, to build brand awareness. Descriptive research comprehensively depicts phenomena in natural and human-made contexts (Moleong, 2018). Following Babbie (2020), descriptive research offers a comprehensive understanding of facts, realities, and symptoms. The research analysis was obtained through the in-depth interview and tied to the concepts used in this study. This study explores whether the resort has followed Levin (2020) influencer marketing strategy phases as its primary marketing communication tool. This study conducted a comprehensive literature review to examine the theories and research findings of influencer marketing that have been previously utilized and associated with the subject matter.

This study employed a purposive sample strategy to choose informants as the primary source of data collection through interviews. Creswell and Creswell (2023) assert that in the context of qualitative research, selecting the object of study is a deliberate and purposeful process. The next step involves the researcher carefully choosing individuals or locations that can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The research collected primary data through interviews with the purposively selected resort's co-founder, the sales and marketing manager. The research methodology employed in this study involved using semi-structured, in-depth interviews as the primary data collection tool. Esterberg (2002) found that interviews fall under the in-depth interview category of greater flexibility in their implementation than structured interviews. The research employed a semi-structured interview technique, which allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the research issue. This approach facilitated an open and candid exchange of opinions and ideas with the resource person or research participant.

The acquisition of data in the process of conducting research holds significant importance as it ensures the validity of the research and the ability of the gathered data to substantiate the integrity of the research environment. Research instruments are crucial study components, encompassing various tools and techniques employed to collect and analyze data within the research methodology framework. The rationale behind utilizing a research instrument is to facilitate the collection, examination, and investigation of a subject under study. Research instruments are essential to investigate symptoms under study, enabling reliable and valid data acquisition. Additionally, this method is valuable for acquiring or substantiating the integrity of specific hypotheses.

The study team made several observations through the resort's Instagram account and many internal archives. This study looks at earlier theories and studies on influencer marketing and brand awareness for the literature study component. In addition, data was from examining research themes via the primary marketing communication platform utilized by Mohini Resort Komodo, specifically Instagram (@mohiniresort). Observation is a research activity that examines an object of study within its immediate context (Sugiyono, 2020). This study employed passive non-participant observation, as direct involvement in activities or influencer marketing endeavors at the resort was not undertaken during the observations. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the research subject is crucial when conducting observations. Implementing this approach will enhance the ability to manage observational activities to explore the object of study.

This study's initial phase of data collecting was conducting a comprehensive investigation of the research topic's case on a broader scope. Next, it is necessary to adequately prepare the data to facilitate the conduct of comprehensive and thorough interviews. Following the completion of a comprehensive interview process, the subsequent step is revisiting and analyzing the acquired data, subsequently classifying it following the research topic's requirements. The methodology employed for data analysis in this study is pattern matching. The presence of similarities between the two identified patterns enhances the credibility of the data. The initial pattern pertains to research ideas derived from existing literature, while the latter pattern involves ideas derived from empirical data collected in the field.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The preoccupation with opinion leaders is already familiar (Schach, 2018). As opinion leaders, influencers can shape the thoughts and values of people they know, such as their friends and family. Regarding tourism influencers, the opinion leader or influencer often disseminated information about vacations or travel through sharing and exchanging information on managed social media accounts. Then, they are known to the public because they often lightly share information about local and foreign tourism through their social media accounts.

The Four-Step Influencer Marketing Framework (Levin, 2020) is where a resort has it made to see how everything comes together for opinion leaders, influencers, and business objectives. The resort would have a systematic workflow every time it created an influencer marketing campaign if it followed the steps provided in the framework while

suiting the resort's unique needs by improving and adapting this generalized process. Additionally, the influencer marketing creative strategy in Table 1 can incorporate the seven principles of word of mouth.

Table 1. Four steps in Influencer Marketing for Resort

Steps	Description
Step 1	What is the resort's marketing objective? Who is the resort's target audience? How does the resort define success? Which of the four proven influencer marketing campaign types will suit the resort's needs?
Step 2	Examine the traits of the 14 different campaign strategies on Instagram and create a list of 2–5 that suit the resort's marketing objective, target audience, and definition of success.
Step 3	(1) The resort's creative idea: What is the unique insight? What is the opportunity? What is the idea? (2) Creator selection process: Where will they be based? What are their personality traits like? What values do they share with the resort's brand? What categories are they in? How many pieces of content will each influencer create and post? Will the resort work with fewer influencers (each with a larger audience) or vice versa?
Step 4	What is the resort's total budget for this project? What are the resort unit costs, targets, and business impacts using the four campaign types from Step 1? How is the resort's overall campaign scope determined using values and parameters from Step 3: The creator selection process?

Source: Levin, 2020

Table 1 above is a step-by-step structure for transforming influencer marketing into a scalable media channel that perfectly matches the rest of the resort's marketing. The approach is appealing, particularly if it wants to compare its influencer marketing campaigns to other traditional promotional channels. The following is a more detailed discussion of each stage:

Marketing Objective, Target Audience, and Definition of Success

The resort found that the other competing star-rating accommodations are on social media, leading to the question of how to use social media best to market the resort and its services more effectively (Lin et al., 2018). According to the West Manggarai Tourism Office, the number of tourist visitors and hotels has increased annually over the last ten years. In 2015, there were 60 hotels with 1,540 rooms available, yet up until 2021, there were 113 hotels with 2,149 rooms (Datang et al., 2022). The resort identified the social media marketing objective of utilizing influencer marketing efforts as the starting point of the strategy. It implemented the effort several months before the COVID-19 pandemic started in early 2020. Following an honest review from a tourist who turned out to be an influencer, the resorts prefer to engage with influencers or bloggers to transmit information and messages about their rooms, facilities, and services to potential visitors. The aim aligns with Yetimoğlu and Uğurlu (2020) discovery of the importance and commonality of including influencers in communication and marketing strategies for promoting hotel groups, destinations, or airlines.

Given that it is still relatively young compared to the other well-known star-rating hotel micro-competitors in the same Labuan Bajo areas, it formed the basis of the ultimate social media marketing objective: to increase brand awareness. Later, using the appropriate

stages of the influencer marketing strategy is meant to structure the process according to the main goals the resort wants to achieve (Levin, 2020). The findings align with the assertions made by Lin et al. (2018), which emphasize the importance of a company determining its core objective, identifying the target audience, and establishing the criteria for success through key performance indicators (KPIs) before embarking on influencer marketing endeavors. When the essential social media marketing objective is to raise awareness, any influencer marketing campaign should have just one objective (Levin, 2020).

Any tourism business should consider its target audience when developing its communication strategies, as Broom and Sha (2013) suggest. With this in mind, the resort set its target audience as active, adventurous men and women in the Millennials (Generation Y) and Post-Millennials (Generation Z) age categories, the Instagram users who are traveling enthusiasts, primarily early adopters. Being early adopters, the Millennials and Post-Millennials age groups have messages about and experiences with the resorts as the product, and the resort can determine whether it will succeed or fail. Hence, it will become more established when these generations endorse the resort (Buttle et al., 2016).

Millennials are the next future tourists since they are becoming a tourism sector market opportunity in the future (Hakim, 2019). Attractive celebrity influencers impact their lifestyle because Millennials, as consumers, seek to get the influencers' stories about their everyday lives and update information about their daily activities several times a day (Nadanyiova et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Post-millennials (Generation Z), the younger generation of Millennials, are crucial to promoting tourism (Kadarisman, 2019), since they and social media have tremendous potential to support information and publications on travel. Post-millennials are crucial in helping families and individuals decide where to go on vacation, given that they primarily use social media to research travel options, acting as opinion leaders (Dewi & Yuliati, 2018).

Table 2. Target Audience of Mohini Komodo Resort's Influencer Marketing

Audience Parameter	Value
Location	International, Domestic
Interests and affinities	The adventurous trip, Instagram-able spot, and honeymoon tour
Age	18-24 (Post-Millennial), 25-34 years old (Millennial)
Family cycle	Young singles, young couples
Gender	Male and female
Price	Mid-market
Purpose of visit	Leisure: family holiday, honeymoon, exotic holiday
Segments	Sight-seeing, sand, sea, sun

Source: Mohini Komodo Resort, 2021

Considering Labuan Bajo has become one of the trending honeymoon destinations (Jaimun et al., 2020), the resort also targets newlyweds as a particular interest group, as shown in Table 2. Accommodation is one of the influencing factors in honeymooners' fantasy experiences. Thus, a resort could make honeymoon destinations more attractive and fascinating (Kumar & Saxena, 2022) by providing the Instagramable spot with lovely sights and affordable prices to feed the hunting motivation of the couples on their

memorable occasion trip. The resort, an 'Insta-worthy' accommodation, caters to ardent Instagram users who value sharing their experiences, maintaining a high social status, and, at the exact moment, seeking adventure. It favors adventurous audiences that want to take a day excursion by boat or live on board by being close to the port of ships. The resort mainly attracts middle-class individuals with a Socio-Economic Status (SES) B as a 3-star rating accommodation.

Since the primary goal is brand awareness, the resort must implement one type of campaign focusing on attention. In practice, influencer marketing comprises four types of campaigns: attention, interest, action, and production, which can align with each consumer journey point. In an attention campaign, a resort's primary goal is to raise awareness among a new or existing target audience. The strategic approach is to reach as many relevant consumers as possible at the lowest cost with the most significant impact (Levin, 2020).

Regarding KPIs, determining the resort's success is essential to creating alignment between the influencer marketing strategy and the main objectives set in the first place (Levin, 2020). The resort set the influencer marketing activity definition of success in Instagram profile traffic, namely the number of people who click on its profile, save posts, share, and ask about the resort through Instagram direct messages or WhatsApp. However, in an attention campaign, the resort could go beyond impressions, views, or followers to understand what effect the campaign had on perception or behavior throughout the consumer journey by posing the appropriate questions to the targeted audience of campaign-exposed consumers (Levin, 2020). Thus, the resort and the utilization of the attention campaign foresee results from an interest and action campaign. However, as in the production campaign results, it publishes continuous content showing influencers having enjoyable moments in the resort's facilities and services for its Instagram feed.

The Right Campaign Strategy

Adapting the right platform to the target group is crucial, as Nadanyiova et al. (2020) believed, which in the resort's case are Millennials (Generation Y) and Post-Millennials (Generation Z). Influencers are rising across all ages and product categories, although they are particularly associated with Millennials in categories such as luxury travel (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Furthermore, a survey by Dewi and Yulianti (2018) proved that Post-millennials (Generation Z) are more comfortable looking for and getting information about tourist destinations through social media. They will be interested in visiting certain attractions based on the information they get. The research findings indicated that companies need to consider using independent third-party endorsers to increase the credibility of information conveyed on social networks.

Instagram has the ambition to become the most popular social network for business promotions (Radvan, 2021). Considering Instagram's strength as a visual platform since it is the world's number one photo-sharing platform (Zulli, 2018), Levin (2020) determines fourteen types of influencer marketing strategies that will cover any campaign objective and creative angle or strategy that marketers can see in the following table:

Table 3. Influencer Marketing Campaign Types on Instagram

Campaign Type			
Type 1	Single Feed Post Campaign	Type 8	Going Live for Maximum Authenticity
Type 2	Story-Only Campaign	Type 9	Supporting Hero Brand Campaigns
Type 3	Pairing Feed Posts and Stories	Type 10	Driving Consideration Through Polls
Type 4	Ambassador Program	Type 11	Hyper Local Campaigns
Type 5	Amplifying Brand Experiences	Type 12	Swipe-Up Lead Generation
Type 6	Burst Campaigns	Type 13	Creating Content for Ads
Type 7	Real-Time Recruitment	Type 14	Using Influencers as Talent

Source: Levin, 2020

Table 3 shows some campaign types that could extend the resort's clearly defined marketing objective, target audience, and definition of success. Though the interface layout of Instagram positions the glance as a dominant way of viewing images (Zulli, 2018), rather than using only the feed or Stories to upload their content, influencers utilize Instagram features by combining the feed with Stories. The resort expected that the information on the influencers' Instagram feeds would stay on the screen if the account owner did not erase it. Meanwhile, Instagram Stories, the horizontal image that runs at the top of the influencer's home page, is one of the most extensive additions to Instagram as of late (Sutrisno & Ariesta, 2019). Most celebrities use ephemeral Instagram Stories, where the information about the resort stays on their account for only twenty-four hours and disappears (Hidayat et al., 2020).

The resort, therefore, paired Instagram feed posts and Stories (type 3) with the swipe-up lead generation feature (type 11). Type 3 creative strategy could be mixing the behind-the-scenes story with high-quality feed post content that tells a fuller resort's brand story. The resort invited the influencers to tag the resort's Instagram profile in their Instagram Stories three times a day at a minimum frequency. This ingenious method has significant advantages, allowing numerous raw and polished narratives to reach customers in two features with the same messaging (Levin, 2020). The resort used type 11 to complement the type 3 creative strategy to attain the critical benefit of those activities. In this case, the resort directed the swipe-up post to the landing page to drive the audience to the booking inquiries.

Furthermore, influencer material can direct a consumer to a resort page, allowing the resort to retarget that consumer via current social media channels or show campaign funnels for lead generation. It could drive visitors to an email sign-up page, allowing it to enter the leads into an email marketing campaign to promote its offering. Besides, instead of running separate campaigns, Naik and Raman (2003) suggest reaching target consumers from multiple angles by integrating influencer marketing with other new media (e.g., search ads, mobile marketing) to realize synergy, which emerges when the combined effect of two or more media exceeds their individual enforces on outcomes (Leung et al., 2022).

By determining several suitable types for influencer marketing activities, the resort has defined the right campaign strategy through Instagram, the primary marketing communication platform, by crowdsourcing the influencers' resources. It is natural for a company to apply several, between two and five, creative strategies for the same campaign to direct the next step within the influencer marketing framework after examining the characteristics of each strategy and contrasting their critical advantages with the traits of

the different campaign types. Which of these strategies will be successful depends on several factors, including the resort, the services and products, the audience, messaging, goals, and campaign objectives (Levin, 2020).

As almost no one pays for the resort's reservations the first time they see an accommodation, that approach powers the rest of the marketing funnel by starting with the most potent trigger in marketing: word of mouth (Levin, 2020). The trust and independence of influencers are crucial because, according to Martínez-López et al. (2020), followers or fans of influencers increasingly rely on messages shared by their peers when looking for information and choosing which goods or services to purchase. The resort utilizes the critical message #StayAtMohini to express the gist of "Stay at Mohini" as the messaging strategy found in most influencer posts, either in Instagram feeds or Stories. Following that main hashtag, the other highest hashtags are #MohiniResort and #MohiniExplorer. The English word in hashtag #StayAtMohini can be disseminated directly to foreign visitors, considering that foreign tourists come more than local and domestic visitors, according to West Manggarai Tourism Officer on Labuan Bajo tourist visits data from before 2011 to recent years (Datang et al., 2022).

To evaluate each applicable strategy's relevancy level, Levin (2020) provided a creative strategy scorecard recommending blended creative types when a company sells products or services directly online. A measure is when the resort's combination of influencer marketing and creative strategy has produced the best engagement performance after being evaluated.

Creativity, Creators, and Content

Buhalis (1998) believed since a traveler's experience is an intangible item, a recommendation from one person is crucial for others (Dewi & Yuliati, 2018). There is the consideration that in social media, endorsement through user-generated content (UGC) is more credible because users generally create it based on their experience to the extent of influencing the audience's decision-making process (Dewi & Yuliati, 2018), so the followers will be more educated about what is available and what they will get if they stay at the resort.

The resort evaluated unique insights from its Instagram audience analytics. While staying, it found the audience's fascination with content containing the owned infinity pool and fantastic views of beauty by the hills and sea. This unique insight helped spark the resort's creativity and identify a message that resonates with the influencers as creators, their community, and consumers. Consumers are eager to understand exciting attractions on the hotel property, including scenic spots for photographs, restaurants with secret menus, or components rarely mentioned or known by others (Chan et al., 2021). The resort then utilized the content creation opportunity to collaborate with the influencers.

The resort considered certain aspects of selecting an appropriate and consistent influencer, similar to the target audience of influencers and brands, to engage targeted audiences better, as Ye et al. (2021) suggested. Choosing a target audience is crucial because their follower base typically only serves as a proxy for audience size in influencer marketing. Consequently, marketers calculate influencer marketing costs based on the influencer's follower range. The categories are nano-, micro-, macro-, mega-, and celebrity

influencers, which describe them based on their followers. Nano-influencers' followers are primarily friends, acquaintances, and others who live close by (fewer than 10,000 followers). A micro-influencer is an influencer with a smaller but often highly engaged audience (typically 10,000 to 99,999 followers). At the same time, a macro-influencer is an influencer with a more extensive following on one or several of their active platforms (on Instagram, commonly over 100,000 followers up to one million). Mega-influencers have a million or more followers on social media and have achieved celebrity status due to their proven skills. According to Campbell and Farrell (2020), marketers use celebrity influencers with widespread public recognition outside social media to leverage their sizable following.

Mega influencers, such as Karin Novilda @awkarin, significantly impacted the resort. Utilizing the resort's four image posts on Instagram mentioning her, the resort's Instagram volume managed to gain 10,000 followers, and in total, the posts reached 38,000 accounts and earned 4,252 engagements. Meanwhile, the influencer gained 385,007 likes from her one-image post feed, geotagging the resorts' locations. The resort has collaborated in varied roles, from micro to celebrity influencers, such as Endah Lestari @el.journeys, Aris Suhendra @kabutipis, Febrian @_febrian, Anggey Anggraini @her_journeys, Karin Novilda @awkarin, DJ Yasmin @dj_yasmin, and many more micro-influencers. Furthermore, most micro-influencer followers in social networks are within the peer group of the target audience, that is, friends or family members, who somehow are the most respected influencers among others, whose opinions the target audience values, and whom they turn to for advice (Buttle et al., 2016).

After several years of enforcing influencer marketing, the resort claimed the influencer marketing effort had the desired effect in addition to brand awareness, i.e., inspiring purchase intention. Case in point: the up to 20% increase in booking numbers. It is clear that influencers use their celebrated status to promote awareness (Campbell & Farrell, 2020), as well as the increasing number of followers on the resort's Instagram account, which indicates that celebrities have a positive impact on attracting consumer attention to the rooms (Hidayat et al., 2020), eventually encouraging their followers to make a reservation.

An influencer-brand fit significantly impacts how consumers react to the promoted goods or services, and marketers need to know how to pick influencers to collaborate with and better understand how to do so (Breves et al., 2019). Accordingly, the resort influencer's selection prioritizes roles and categories of influencers among celebrities, travel, and lifestyle influencers who have the consistency of traveling content to accommodate the brand-influencer congruency in the partnership. Influencers expect brands that partner with them in their promotion campaign to fit well with the images they provide and believe that the partnership will benefit both parties (Yılmaz et al., 2020). They also hoped that brands would evaluate their followers' features and determine the similarities with the campaign's target group they plan to engage.

Making good communication in advance and not leaving the influencer completely free to manage the cooperation are some collaboration or cooperation steps for a company (Nadanyiova et al., 2020). However, the resort should have written the brief in the contract, though the influencer partnership experiences were barter collaborations, not money

incentives in paid partnerships, as in the social media endorsement. The briefs typically provide content briefs that outline the campaign's objectives, key messages, and deliverables, which the influencers expect to convey (Leung et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the resort could also refrain from forcing the influencer into something they do not want to do, not be afraid to direct the influencer and let influencers say something negative. It may be preferable to give influencers much less autonomy or creative control (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). This way, the resort grants influencers a great deal of freedom to compose content as they choose, in alignment with their positioning, so that the content resonates with followers (Leung et al., 2022).

Therefore, the resort instead considered collaborative activities with an influencer who had already planned their vacation in Labuan Bajo and initiated contact and communication of their stay plan to the resort. This behavior is consistent with Femenia-Serra et al. (2022) findings that the COVID-19 crisis significantly changed practices in the previously unidirectional relationship between brands and influencers. Before the pandemic, for instance, brands frequently approached influencers; today, however, influencers occasionally go in the opposite direction and address travel agencies and destinations on their way. Influencers offer strategies and alternatives for reactivation, and brands ask the influencer community for help and support.

Budget, Target, and Media Planning

The two-step flow communication theory identified communication in two steps: from mass media, such as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines, to opinion leaders and audiences (Hilbert et al., 2016). The resort somehow found that influencer marketing was more efficient than conventional advertising in conventional mass media. It leveraged influencer marketing for promotion cost reduction, considering influencers as cost-effective and convenient commercial content providers who directly reach the target consumers of businesses (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). As one of the most recent innovations that have allowed businesses to influence the purchasing decisions of potential customers, influencer marketing could create excellent content without incurring the high costs typical of most marketing initiatives (Yetimoğlu & Uğurlu, 2020), which happened to be effective for resorts, the tourism business that primarily focuses on leisure markets, in achieving its objective. Providing a broad reach to engaged audiences while frequently not being recognized as advertising by consumers, influencer marketing appears to be a successful and affordable promotional tactic (Ye et al., 2021).

An efficient influencer marketing implementation includes several crucial rules, including setting the budget for cooperation when choosing the appropriate influencer (Nadanyiova et al., 2020). The budget is central when selecting the proper influencer because not all influencers charge or request the same benefits or compensation. One of the influencer positions, micro-influencers, begins with barter arrangements rather than financial incentives. Then, after gaining enough traction and a larger follower base, they accept travel and lodging as a reward (Kumar & Saxena, 2022). Additionally, Yılmaz et al. (2020) reported that travel influencers prefer collaborative work systems since, in that way, they do not have to deal with budget calculations. In this regard, the resort did not spend cash on barter collaboration as a working system. Still, the resort should have a specific

budget specification for influencer marketing activities or a special allocation of funds to carry out influencer marketing activities (Levin, 2020), even if there is no definite formula for allocating budgets because each hospitality business has different needs.

As the product and service value offering, the resort typically allocates and provides value worth staying for one to two nights in the suite-type barn, breakfast, and airport pickup and drop-off (a budget allocation worth IDR 2,500,000 to IDR 5,000,000) for each influencer's collaboration. The collaboration budget value is compromising and open for adjustments for influencers' requests and conditions, such as occupancy status, vacation period, and weather conditions that might affect flight schedules to Labuan Bajo. The resort appreciates the need to create personalized compensation offers for each influencer since this helps avoid overpaying some influencers while underpaying top performers. This resort's step followed what Stanková and Kuchta (2020) suggested: the influencer marketing approach should be flexible and dynamic since its process depends on an interaction between two parties.

In a non-monetary influencer marketing performance, such as barter, the company primarily sets the value of products or services in the contract or the communication between the marketer and the influencer (Radvan, 2021). It communicated to the influencers its offer of a suite barn type as its prospective best services' worth through WhatsApp, the personal communication application. Despite that, the resort did not create a brief in a written document about the collaboration with the influencers to mention the reward or the deal, similar to the creative strategy.

Consider how many followers an influencer has as a proxy for their reach and as a starting point for assigning value to them. However, the entire worth of influencers should account for all sources of value, not just their followers' numbers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020) but also their impact on a resort's social media follower growth. Most tourism businesses attempt to measure the cost of their lift in awareness through influencer marketing campaigns using measures that quantify follower growth, engagement (e.g., likes, comments, shares, mentions), website or profile traffic, campaign hashtags, sentiment data, and also press and media (Leung et al., 2022).

Instagram ranks its users based on their visibility, and the more likes, followers, and influence one has, the more valuable they become to potential advertisers (Zulli, 2018). However, the resort did not set targets based on cost per unit as the objective of a single campaign or year but on the potential reach of each contributing influencer based on follower numbers. For instance, when partnering with a macro influencer with 100,000 followers, the resort will object to a 1,000-follower boost to its Instagram profile. This intent follows what Tjandrawibawa (2020) investigates: whether using celebrity endorsements on social media is more effective in raising the number of followers on the resort's social media accounts. When influencers' followers are interested in the brand, they visit or follow the brand's Instagram account and increase the number of followers and page visits on the account, thereby growing their brand awareness.

One of Instagram's influencer marketing goals is to have one resort's images noticed. The resort participated in brand storytelling on several levels, along with an influencer-created hero image in the feed post, which it repeated for content on its account. It consistently republished the influencer's Instagram post twice a week on different days

on its feed at strategic posting times to be clever about its posting habits and maximize its visibility. This way, the resort could use the content to show a final product or look at a feed post paired with a how-to set of clips through stories. A resort's Instagram account should schedule postings to optimize looks so followers receive consistent imagery. The more consistent the brand, the more likely viewers will glance at the account. Considering millions of users post pictures daily, Instagram updates with new images to look at (Zulli, 2018). Hence, it is crucial to do continued research in establishing guidelines for how tourism businesses should repurpose influencer content, such as when and where to maximize its downstream effects (Leung et al., 2022).

The importance of Instagram influencers in promoting accommodations near Komodo Island and branding the island significantly impacts the dissemination of information and marketing of tourist attractions, particularly in Labuan Bajo. The implementation of brand enrichment in Labuan Bajo, which serves as the main access point to Komodo Island, facilitated influencers' rapid dissemination of information. Utilize diverse and captivating techniques and strategies, including visualization, accomplished successful branding, which can gain popularity and rapidly influence the community. Furthermore, these influencers effectively reached a larger audience by creating and sharing tourism-related content that promotes positive outcomes for the super-destination image.

CONCLUSION

The resort in Komodo, Mohini Resort, performed an influencer marketing stage strategy in conducting influencer marketing as the primary tactic of its marketing communications through its Instagram account @mohiniresort, despite the challenging situation, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been some opportunities after the pandemic since 2020, such as when influencers changed their usual travel practices from long and international trips to only traveling domestically. As one of the domestic destinations, the resort stated that establishing the company's brand awareness after carrying out influencer marketing activities is the primary tool for marketing communication activities.

For fruitful attempts, the resort has implemented most influencer marketing stage strategies in executing the influencer marketing activities. First, the resort determined its marketing objectives, target audience, and definition of success. It has set the goal of influencer marketing activities to raise awareness as the primary purpose, with a target audience of women and men, Millennials (Generation Y) and Post-Millennials (Generation Z), SES-class B, and active Instagram users who have a hobby of traveling. Second, it purposefully sets the right campaign strategy based on the types of influencer marketing in general. In performing its influencer marketing activities, the resort chose several types of influencer marketing available on Instagram, such as single feed posts, Stories posts, pairing feed posts and stories, and swipe-up lead generation.

Third, the resort puts the creative process of content, creators or influencers, and content into action. It executed the content creation process by examining audience insights from Instagram analytics, their interest in the infinity pool, and the natural scenery of the

resort. Finally, the fourth was the allocation of funds. The resort did not have a monetary budget for influencer marketing activities and was willing to adjust the budget to the influencers' needs. Eventually, a strong understanding of effectively combining influencers, content formats, platforms, and the timing and sequencing of these elements should provide a resort with advantageous insights. The resort had stable room occupancy figures using the influencer marketing framework to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic beyond its main marketing objective of raising brand awareness.

The emergence of influencers as viable tourism marketing communications tactics necessitates the establishment of an incubator setting that can impart the necessary competencies to effectively transform information into marketable assets within the relatively untapped domain of the tourism industry. Further investigation can uncover more insights into how influencers can showcase elements outside of lodging, including the untapped natural resources in the vicinity of Komodo Island, located in East Nusa Tenggara.

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