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Optimizing Brand Awareness and Purchase Intent in Travel Agents: Communication Strategy through Social Media Marketing

Widi Senalasari[1], Mara Setiaji[1], Nino Khrisnamurti[2], Agustinus Februadi[1]

[1]Department of Business Administration, Politeknik Negeri Bandung, Indonesia
[2]Doctoral Research, University of The West Scotland, United Kingdom
Correspondence author: widi.senalasari@polban.ac.id

ABSTRACT:

High demand of tourism services in Indonesia has increased the number of travel agency businesses. However, conventional travel agencies must face difficulties by competing with Online Travel Agents (OTAs). This study aims to investigate the impact of communication strategy using the AIDA model on social media marketing strategies in enhancing brand awareness of traditional travel agencies and purchase intention. 420 respondents who have acquired conventional travel agency services via social media filled out the e-questionnaire and became the sample of this study. Data analysis was done using the partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) method. This study found a positive relationship between communication strategy using the AIDA model and its impact on social media marketing. A positive correlation between brand awareness and purchase intention to social media marketing was also found. The findings of this research can be utilized by traditional travel agents to reorganize their marketing strategies through social media to increase brand awareness and purchase intention so that they will be able to compete with OTAs.

Keywords:
Communication Strategy, Social Media Marketing, Travel Agencies, Brand Awareness, Purchase Intention

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1. INTRODUCTION

The travel agency business has grown due to the increasing demand for tourists (Anjastantri, 2017). In 2021, West Java has 875 conventional tourist travel business entities and this has not significantly changed compared to the previous three years (Dinas Pariwisata dan Kebudayaan Jawa Barat, 2024), which indicates the severe competitiveness in this industry, especially since now tourism has entered the 4.0 revolution (Bramantyo & Ismail, 2021; Lu et al., 2022). This phenomenon is then being utilized by Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) to grow their businesses, which is affecting the tourism industry (Anjastantri, 2017; Talwar et al., 2020b). West Java itself ranked second in the largest number of workers at commercial tourist attraction companies in Indonesia, and two of the cities in West Java occupy positions 6 and 7 for cities in Indonesia with the highest tourism index (Liputan6.com, 2016; Rizaty, 2022). Just like traditional travel agencies, OTAs also offer tourism information, transportation tickets, holiday packages, hotel rooms, and other travel services (Talwar et al., 2020b, 2020a; Utami & Octaviany, 2017). By utilizing OTAs, consumers found it easier to collect tourism information and evaluate similar travel products or services from different companies (Jasrotia et al., 2023; Talwar et al., 2020b). Unfortunately, those advantages harmed traditional travel agents. Many conventional travel agents were forced to shut down due to decreasing sales and their inability to compete with OTAs (KumparanBISNIS, 2019). These conventional travel agencies could not compete due to the lack of capital to market and sell like OTAs. Additionally, government policy also plays a part in this since it favors OTAs over conventional travel agents (Zuhriyah, 2019).

The changes in technological development have led the world to digital realism that revolutionized the lifestyle of people and all aspects of the business (Chu et al., 2020; Senalasari et al., 2022; Wibisono, Rafdinal, et al., 2023). It affects how people and businesses communicate and allows them to conduct digital marketing to share their products and services online, reduce costs, increase Return on Investment (ROI), and connect directly with potential customers (Al-Azzam & Al-Mizeed, 2021; Az-Zahra et al., 2023; Rafiq & Javeid, 2018). Also, in this digital age, a company's marketing communication should focus on making customers aware of a product, building relationships, and providing value for both parties (Al-Azzam & Al-Mizeed, 2021; Özgul & Akbar, 2018). For this objective, utilizing social media as a platform to communicate and market businesses' products and services has become common. This is because social media allows consumers to compare the quality, pricing, features, services, and usability of products and services between companies (Idris et al., 2017; Rafiq & Javeid, 2018; Wibisono, Senalasari, et al., 2023).

According to Damanik et al. (2020) and Jiang et al. (2023), the AIDA model has the potential to be utilized in the development of a social media marketing strategy for a company. AIDA is a marketing communication model that emphasizes brand or service recognition and existence to promote client intention and action (Hassan et al., 2015; Jiang et al., 2023; Mumtaz, 2019). AIDA serves as a psychological framework to facilitate the transition from perceiving an advertisement to making a purchase and is an acronym for Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action (Amanda et al., 2019; Weng et al., 2021). According to earlier studies, AIDA is needed for social media marketing and may attract customers' attention (Mumtaz, 2019; Trisnayanti et al., 2022). Idris et al. (2017) stated that customers'

buying decision depends on social media information, and the AIDA model plays a vital role in bridging the gap between social media marketing and consumer purchases. This study is carried out to investigate the influence of the AIDA model on social media marketing and its efficacy in augmenting brand awareness and purchase intention for conventional travel agencies in the region of West Java, addressing the issue of intense competition within the travel agency business.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 AIDA

AIDA (Aware, Interest, Desire, Action) is a communication theory that many believe was proposed by E. St. Elmo Lewis in 1989 but later analyzed that it was either Brown in 1904 or Dukesmith and Sheldon (Iwamoto, 2023). The initial purpose of this model was to explain all the stages that a salesperson should take when engaging with a potential customer (Iwamoto, 2023). However, its current usage is mainly focused on clarifying ways of advertising communication (Pramita & Manafe, 2022). This marketing communication model focuses on the brand or service's recognition and existence to stimulate consumers' intention and action (Hassan et al., 2015; Idris et al., 2017). This model usually being used to control someone's step of psychological transformation from seeing an advertisement to the purchasing phase made by them (Trisnayanti et al., 2022).

Ojagh et al. (2023) and Pramita & Manafe (2022) stated that the AIDA model can be used effectively for internet services, just like it can be used effectively for goods and services. AIDA model has a huge impact on social media marketing strategies to create public attention towards the company's social media (Idris et al., 2017; Trisnayanti et al., 2022). According to Mumtaz (2019), each component of the AIDA model holds practical value and offers benefits when used within the realm of social media utilization. This model confirms that the ads on social media could attract customers' attention and then provide information to them until it stimulates the intention to make a decision (Stepaniuk, 2017; Su et al., 2019). This communication model can be used by travel agencies in managing their social media to get more engagement to emphasize brand recognition and existence. Since AIDA is a model, the current study will use the term communication strategy to imply the AIDA model discussed in this subchapter. Based on the discussion above, the hypothesis formulated is:

H_1: Communication strategy has a positive effect on social media marketing.

2.2 Social Media Marketing

Social media is a technological platform that facilitates the connection, communication, interaction, and unlimited sharing of personal experiences with others across different parts of the world (Damanik et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2023). These days, the prevalence of social media platforms has experienced a significant surge, leading to a transformative impact on marketing practices (Mumtaz, 2019; Sharma & Verma, 2018). These platforms have the potential to effectively shape customer behavior starting from the initial phase of information acquisition and extending to the post-purchase phase (Seo & Park, 2018; Umair Manzoor et al., 2020). Social media help businesses to connect with their consumers, develop

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relationships foster this relationship at a low cost, and provide customers to find products at competitive pricing (Ahmad et al., 2016; Guha et al., 2021).

In a prior study conducted by Bilgin (2018a), it was found that social media marketing plays an important role in consumers' brand awareness as it can remind customers of a brand and make it stay on their minds. Özgul & Akbar (2018) on their study stated that social media can help brands educate potential customers to gain awareness about their brand. Social media platforms may also function as effective methods for word-of-mouth promotion, as consumers frequently utilize these platforms to get knowledge about items and subsequently share it with others. In research using the FGD method by Hassan et al. (2015), it was found that social media has the potential to be used as a marketing tool because it can quickly reach a wide range of people and successfully engage and persuade consumers to buy something. The utilization of suitable combinations of visuals, captions, models, and endorsers has the potential to stimulate the desire of potential consumers to make purchases, even in cases where the brand has just introduced to the market (Dewi et al., 2022). By utilizing social media marketing to its fullest potential, conventional travel agents could successfully raise brand awareness and customers' interest in purchasing their products and services. Hence, the following hypotheses are formed:

H_2: Social media marketing has a positive impact on the brand awareness of conventional travel agents.

H_3: Social media marketing has a positive impact on the purchase intention of conventional travel agents.

2.3 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness encompasses the extent to which a consumer possesses the ability to identify, acknowledge, and recollect a specific brand across diverse situations (Foroudi, 2019; Trisnayanti et al., 2022). Its existence indicates that customers know the name of the brand, which makes it more likely that they will include that brand in their list of possible choices and, as a result, more likely that they will buy that brand (Azzari & Pelissari, 2021; Harwani & Sakinah, 2020). In previous studies, it is said that brand awareness has an essential role in customer decision-making (Harwani & Sakinah, 2020; Macdonald & Sharp, 2000). Once the customer becomes aware of a brand, there is a high chance that the customers may consider their intention to purchase. One of the things that can affect brand awareness is product reviews given by consumers with prior experience (Dewi et al., 2022). Therefore, the company could use social media to interact with potential buyers to share information with a wider audience (Seo & Park, 2018). Since the competition in the travel industry is high, companies need to make an extra effort to gain customer's brand awareness. The more people are aware of conventional travel agents, the greater the likelihood that potential consumers will want to make a purchase. Thus, the hypothesis formed is:

H_4: Brand awareness has a positive impact on customers' purchase intention.

2.4 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is a construct that pertains to the degree of consumer optimism and confidence in acquiring a specific product or service (Ying et al., 2021). Consumers will decide to purchase after conducting an information search to fulfill their specific needs and desires (Dewi et al., 2022; Umair Manzoor et al., 2020). According to (Evania et al., 2022), consumers' purchase intentions increase after they see the company's official social media account because it affects their attention, interest, desire, and action towards a product or company.

2.5 Research Model

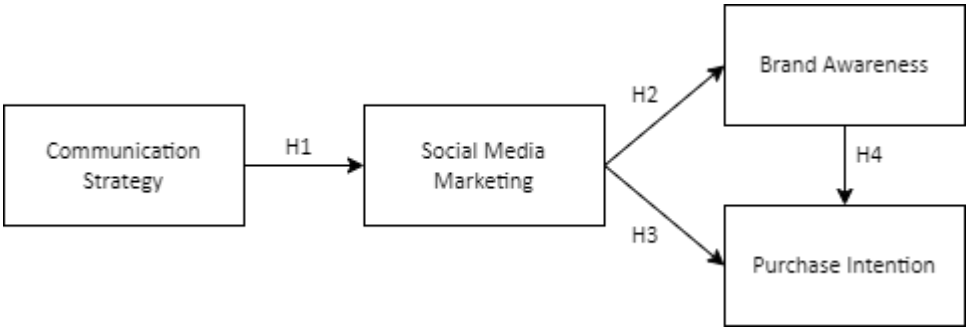

Figure 1.Research Model

3. METHODS

This quantitative study uses a purposive sampling method, considering its ability to focus on respondents with certain chosen criteria (Etikan, 2016). The sample used in this study are individuals who have seen social media of any conventional travel agencies based in West Java. As many as 420 filled out the questionnaires that were distributed in February-March 2023.

Of all the respondents, females are dominating with 287 people (68%), and 133 are male (32%). 375 respondents (89%) were between the ages of 17-24, 39 respondents (9%) were between the ages of 25-32, and the rest were over 32. Young generations are the domination of the respondents, which indicates the potential consumers for conventional travel agents in West Java are within this age range. Also, this could be because this generation is on social media a lot. This is also in line with the income of the respondents, where 257 respondents (61%) made a monthly income below IDR 2 million, 87 respondents (21%) earned between IDR 2 million – IDR 4 million per month, and the rest 76 (18%) made a monthly income above IDR 4 million.

The questionnaires were distributed online, using the 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). One filtered question was used to ensure that the respondents met the criteria to be the sample of the current study. This study used a total of 4 (four) constructs in the questionnaire with the detail shown in Table 1.

The Partial Least Square Structural Equations Model was used to analyze the data by running a two-step approach. The first one was evaluating the validity and reliability of the data collected by analyzing the measurement model. The second one was evaluating the structural model (Goodness of Fit, coefficient determination, and path coefficient) (Hair et al., 2019).

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Table 1. The Indicators of Constructs

Variable	Indicators	Reference
Communication Strategy (based on the AIDA Model)	CS1: Social media can facilitate communication between customers and the company CS2: Social media can stimulate customer's interest in services or products CS3: Social media can help customers understand the features of products or services CS4: Social media can help customers to understand the benefits of products or services	(Evania et al., 2022; Idris et al., 2017)
Social Media Marketing	SMM1: Contents shown on social media about travel agent's services and products are interesting SMM2: Content shown on social media can help me understand the travel agent's services and products SMM3: I can easily find travel agents or travel services through social media	(Idris et al., 2017; Seo & Park, 2018)
Brand Awareness	BA1: I can identify brands easily through social media BA2: I can get more information about a travel agent company or travel products and services through social media BA3: I often notice and pay attention to information about travel products and services on social media	(Azzari & Pelissari, 2021; Bilgin, 2018)
Purchase Intention	PI1: Using social media sites of brands increase my interest in buying travel agent's products and services PI2: Very likely to choose a travel agent's services recommended by my friends on social media PI3: My willingness to book travel services through social media is high	(Azzari & Pelissari, 2021; Dewi et al., 2022; Wibisono, et al., 2023)

4.2 Measurement Model Analysis

The objective of the measurement model is to assess the reliability of each indicator, encompassing convergent validity, internal consistency reliability, and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019). According to Henseler et al. (2016), the assessment of convergent validity can be done by confirming that each outer loading indicator has a value > 0.70 and the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) value > 0.5. The variable will be considered reliable when both Cronbach alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) values are> 0.7 (Hair et al., 2011).

Table 2. Result of Measurement Model

Constructs	Loading	CA	CR	AVE
Communication Strategy		**0,714**	**0,824**	**0,539**
CS1	0,725			
CS2	0,790			
CS3	0,718			
CS4	0,701			
Social Media Marketing		**0,700**	**0,833**	**0,625**
SMM1	0,801			
SMM2	0,818			
SMM3	0,752			
Brand Awareness		**0,685**	**0,826**	**0,613**
BA1	0,760			
BA2	0,832			
BA3	0,754			
Purchase Intention		**0,706**	**0,836**	**0,630**
PI1	0,765			
PI2	0,817			
PI3	0,797			

Table 2 shows that the instruments used in this research are valid because the outer loading values surpass 0.7 and the AVE values greater than 0.5. A total of 4 indicators were removed to maintain the validity of the model. Concerning the assessment of reliability, it is noteworthy that even though the CR and CA values for the variables SMM and PI are equal to or below 0.7, it is nevertheless deemed that all variables exhibit an acceptable level of reliability. According to Hair et al. (2011, 2019), the reliability analysis should pay attention to both CA and CR value, since the CA value has limitations by producing a lower reliability value.

Discriminant validity analysis aims to evaluate the distinctiveness of the observed construct compared to other constructs. Therefore, this study used the Fornell-Larcker criterion to assess the discriminant validity. The application of the Fornell-Larcker criterion requires that the correlation value between a variable and its corresponding construct must exceed the correlation value between that variable with other constructs (Hair et al., 2017). As shown in Table 3, the variable used in this research is valid and reliable to be used in structural model testing.

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Variables	CS	SMM	BA	PI
CS	**0,734**			
SMM	0,552	**0,791**		
BA	0,454	0,483	**0,783**	
PI	0,358	0,533	0,494	**0,794**

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4.3 Structural Model Analysis

The testing of the structural model can be conducted after the assessment of the validity and reliability of the measurement model. The purpose of conducting a test on a structural model is to examine the relationships among variables. It encompasses the goodness of fit (GoF), coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size ($F^{2)}$, and path coefficients (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 4. The Goodness-of-Fit Result

Variables	AVE	R^2	Q^2
Communication Strategy	0,539		
Social Media Marketing	0,625	0,305	0,175
Brand Awareness	0,613	0,233	0,130
Purchase Intention	0,630	0,357	0,218
Average Score	**0,602**	**0,298**	
AVE x R^2		**0,179**	
GoF = $\sqrt{(AVE \times R^2)}$		**0,423**	

Henseler et al. (2016) categorize the GoF values into three groups: 0.36 (big), 0.25 (mid), and 0.10 (small). Table 4 shows the GoF value of 0.423, which is categorized as large, indicating a high level of suitability and accuracy of the model proposed in this study with the hypotheses developed (Wang et al., 2016). The evaluation of the R^2 value is used to examine the simultaneous effect of exogenous variables on the endogenous variables and their prediction rates are classified into 3: 0.19 (weak), 0.33 (moderate), and 0.67 (large) (Hair et al., 2017). Table 4 shows that all exogenous variables moderately affect the endogenous variables. The determination of the predictive relevance value is decided by the value of Q^2, which must be greater than 0 (Hair et al., 2019). Table 4 shows that this study exceeded the required threshold.

The evaluation of the structural model involves the analysis of the correlations between variables in the proposed research model using bootstrapping. This assessment aims to ascertain the significant relationship between the variables and the hypotheses formed in this study. Hypotheses can be accepted when the t-value passes 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05 (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 5. Result of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis		Direct			Result
		β	T Values	P Values	
H_1	CS→SMM	0,552	10,724	0,000	Accepted
H_2	SMM→BA	0,483	9,661	0,000	Accepted
H_3	SMM→PI	0,384	6,158	0,000	Accepted
H_4	BA→PI	0,309	5,083	0,000	Accepted

According to Table 5, all hypotheses have been accepted as all p-values are less than 0.5 and all t-values are bigger than 1.96. The analysis reveals that communication strategy using the AIDA model exhibits a parameter coefficient of 0.552. Therefore, it can be inferred that the implementation of a communication strategy using the AIDA model can enhance the effectiveness of social media marketing for conventional travel agencies by 55.2%. Based on

the t-value of 10.0724 and the p-value of 0.000, H_1 is supported, indicating a statistically significant and positive relationship between the variables of communication strategy and social media marketing.

Secondly, social media marketing has a parameter coefficient of 0.483, suggesting that it can increase brand awareness by 48.3%. Based on a t-value of 9.661 and a p-value of 0.000, H_2 is accepted for having a significant and positive relationship with brand awareness. Subsequently, social media marketing also has a significant and positive effect on purchase intention, as evidenced by a t-value of 6.158 and p-value of 0.000 (H_3 accepted). Lastly, brand awareness is found to have a positive significant impact on purchase intention by 30.9%. The H_4 is accepted given the t-value is 5.083 and the p-value is 0.000.

Table 6. Indirect Effect Result

Path	Indirect			Total Effect			Result
	β	**T Values**	**P Values**	***β***	**T Values**	**P Values**	
CS→SMM	-	-	-	0,552	10,724	0,000	Accepted
CS→BA	0,267	5,985	0,000	0,267	5,985	0,000	Accepted
CS→PI	0,294	6,361	0,000	0,294	6,361	0,000	Accepted
SMM →BA	-	-	-	0,483	9,661	0,000	Accepted
SMM →PI	0,149	4,971	0,000	0,533	9,902	0,000	Accepted
BA→PI	-	-	-	0,309	5,083	0,000	Accepted

In addition, as presented in Table 6, the constructs have several additional indirect effects. All possible paths shown in Table 4 have a p-value score of 0.000, showing that all the paths have positive and significant relationships within variables.

4. DISCUSSION

Based on the result, the four hypotheses proposed in this study are accepted and the findings in this study will be discussed further by linking it with the previous studies. First, the relationship between communication strategy using the AIDA model and social media marketing showed a positive and significant relation. This finding confirms a previous study conducted by (Idris et al., 2017) where the study stated that AIDA has a good impact on social media marketing. It can be really good to be used to create a social media marketing strategy because it is very helpful and practical (Mumtaz, 2019). Conventional travel agents could re-organize their communication strategy for their social media using the AIDA model. Make sure that the strategy for their social media can facilitate the communication between the company and customers, showing the complete description of features and benefits of the products and services the travel agencies offer.

Second, the positive and significant correlation that exists between social media marketing and brand awareness. A previous study stated that customers prefer to access social media to get the latest information which will later have a positive impact on brand awareness by creating a social media marketing strategy (Seo & Park, 2018). In other words, social media marketing activities are significant instruments for recalling and retaining consumers' memories (Bilgin, 2018). Hence, conventional travel agencies could utilize social media to reach more people and swiftly increase awareness of targeted customers.

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Considering the questions used in the questionnaire of this study, this new social media strategy could include the creation of interesting content, not only about products or services but also entertaining and educational content related to travel. Also, note the importance of copywriting used in the content to ensure it can easily be understood by the audience. Lastly, the use of related hashtags could make it easier for people to find travel agencies on social media.

The third finding is that social media marketing has a significant and positive influence on purchase intention. This finding aligns with a previous study by Idris et al. (2017) who found that consumers will decide to purchase products if they are attracted by marketing information and the layout of communication in social media. It is also supported by a study done by Dewi et al. (2022) who found that when social media marketing is interactive and appealing, it will attract a larger audience and encourage consumers to buy. Thus, by using social media, conventional travel companies could provide information about their company or services to attract people's attention and increase their possibilities of making a purchase.

Lastly, the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention in the current study shows a significant and positive correlation. Guha et al. (2021) stated that once consumers become aware of a product, their intention to purchase will increase and they are willing to pay a certain amount for it. It is also consistent with the findings of (Azzari & Pelissari, 2021) who found that brand awareness helps consumers recognize and comprehend the brand's products, ultimately influencing their purchasing decisions. Considering the intense competition within the travel industry, companies could leverage social media platforms to actively engage with consumers and potential customers. This engagement can facilitate the spread of information, particularly regarding past consumer experiences. By increasing brand awareness, companies are more likely to stimulate customer interest and ultimately drive product or service purchases.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine the effect social media marketing has on brand awareness and purchase intention by applying a communication strategy using the AIDA model. The result of this study shows that most consumers agree that communication strategy using the AIDA model has a positive impact on social media marketing. It could make social media marketing activities seem more attractive and interactive. Hence, the result also shows a positive reaction from the consumers about the function of social media marketing. Customers agree that social media marketing is a good strategy to spread awareness because it can provide information about a brand, product, or service and finally affect their desire to make a purchase decision.

Another finding in this study is that the communication strategy using the AIDA model has a direct impact on social media marketing and indirectly influences brand awareness and purchase intention. The AIDA framework can be effectively employed in the context of social media marketing strategies. It allows conventional travel companies to deliver valuable and informative content to their target audience on various social media platforms. The use of this strategy can effectively enable businesses to expand their reach to a wider audience within a very short period, hence accelerating the delivery of information to intended consumers. The purchasing decisions made by consumers are then influenced by the information they get regarding a specific product or brand.

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