



MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY ANALYSIS AT SLICE COFFEE MEDAN IN ATTRACTING CUSTOMER INTEREST

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ABSTRACT

In response to the growing competition within the culinary industry in Medan, this study aims to analyze the marketing communication strategy implemented by Slice Coffee Medan in attracting customer interest and fostering brand loyalty. The research focuses on identifying the core components of Slice Coffee's marketing communication, evaluating their effectiveness, and understanding their impact on consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. A qualitative case study approach was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews with the café's management and customers, surveys, and on-site observations. These methods enabled a comprehensive understanding of how the café leverages digital platforms—particularly Instagram and TikTok—visual aesthetics, targeted promotional campaigns, and two-way interactive engagement to shape customer perceptions. Data triangulation, member checking, and audit trails were applied to ensure research validity. The findings reveal that Slice Coffee's integrated strategy—highlighted by campaigns such as the "Slice Signature Challenge"—successfully transforms customers into brand advocates, with measurable outcomes including a 32% increase in new visits and a 25% rise in customer return rate within six months. Additionally, the café's focus on visual storytelling and customer-centric interaction has resulted in strong brand recall and emotional attachment among its core demographic of young, digitally active consumers. This study concludes that an integrated and interactive marketing communication strategy, when aligned with customer preferences and supported by consistent branding efforts, can significantly enhance brand competitiveness and sustainability. The results offer both theoretical contributions to the field of marketing communication and practical recommendations for coffee shop businesses in the digital era.

Keywords: marketing communication, customer engagement, digital strategy, social media, brand loyalty, Slice Coffee Medan, qualitative research

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and rapid technological development, the culinary industry, especially the cafe and coffee shop business, is facing increasingly tight competition. Medan City, as one of the centers of economic growth in Indonesia, has experienced significant development in this sector, which is marked by the many local coffee shops that carry unique and diverse concepts. One of the fastest growing is Slice Coffee Medan, which is known for its comfortable atmosphere and quality products. However, amidst the increasing intensity of competition, the success of a coffee shop does not only depend on the quality of its products, but also the effectiveness of its marketing communication strategy. The implementation of the right marketing communication strategy can shape customer perceptions and encourage them to try and continue to use the available services. Therefore, this study focuses on the analysis of how Slice Coffee Medan implements a marketing communication strategy to attract more customers and strengthen its position in a competitive industry.

Marketing communication strategy plays a crucial role in building brand image and increasing customer loyalty. According to Kotler and Keller (2012), an effective marketing communication strategy must be able to communicate product value to consumers, strengthen relationships with them, and create memorable experiences. Meanwhile, Belch and Belch (2018) emphasized that an integrated marketing communication strategy can increase brand awareness and influence consumer purchasing behavior. In the context of the coffee shop business, previous research conducted by Nugroho and Santoso (2021) found that the use of social media and innovative promotional strategies contributed significantly to increasing customer interest (Ritonga et al., 2023). Based on these references, it can be concluded that a well-planned marketing communication strategy is very important in attracting customers, especially in industries with high levels of competition such as the coffee shop business. This study aims to examine the marketing communication strategy implemented by Slice Coffee Medan in attracting customers. The main focus of this study is to identify the elements of marketing communication used, evaluate their effectiveness, and understand their impact on customer decisions in choosing Slice Coffee Medan over other coffee shops. In addition, this study is also expected to provide recommendations for Slice Coffee Medan management to increase customer appeal and loyalty through more optimal marketing communication strategies. Thus, the results of this study are expected to provide real contributions to business actors in the culinary industry in designing marketing communication strategies that are more in line with customer preferences in the digital era (Ritonga et al., 2024).

In addition to examining marketing communication elements, this study also aims to assess the level of effectiveness of the strategies that have been implemented by Slice Coffee Medan. This evaluation is carried out by looking at

customer engagement, increasing the number of new customers, loyalty of existing customers, and the marketing communication model that has been implemented by Slice Coffee Medan. By using this approach, the study can analyze how marketing communication strategies shape customer behavior and how these strategies can be refined to achieve maximum results.

This study also aims to provide recommendations that can be implemented by Slice Coffee Medan to increase customer appeal and loyalty. The recommendations given will be based on research findings that identify the strengths and weaknesses of the marketing communication strategies currently being implemented (Lestari, 2021). Several aspects that are the focus of recommendations include optimizing the use of social media to expand market coverage, improving the quality of visual content to make it more attractive, and implementing promotional strategies that are more relevant to customer segmentation. In addition, this study highlights the importance of building closer relationships with customers through interactive and responsive communication. Based on the social facts and literature review that have been described, this study assumes that innovative and integrated marketing communication strategies have an important role in increasing customer interest in Slice Coffee Medan (Siti, 2022). The use of social media, presentation of attractive visual content, and the application of interactive communication are predicted to strengthen brand image and increase customer interest in the products offered. In addition, promotional strategies that are adjusted to the characteristics of the target market are expected to strengthen customer loyalty and support sustainable business growth. Therefore, this study will look at how the elements of marketing communication used by Slice Coffee Medan increase customer interest and provide competitive advantages amidst increasingly tight culinary business competition (Syafitri et al., 2023).

The results of this study are expected to provide valuable contributions, both academically and practically. Academically, this study aims to enrich the study of marketing communication in the culinary industry, especially in the context of the coffee shop business in Indonesia. Meanwhile, practically, the findings of this study can be a guide for Slice Coffee Medan and other culinary business actors in developing more effective marketing communication strategies that are in line with customer needs in the digital era. By implementing the right marketing communication strategy, coffee shop businesses can not only increase customer interest, but also build long-term loyalty which is the main key to maintaining competitiveness in an increasingly competitive industry. Based on the social facts and literature reviews that have been described, this study assumes that innovative and integrated marketing communication strategies have an important role in increasing customer interest in Slice Coffee Medan.

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strategies that are adjusted to the characteristics of the target market are expected to strengthen customer loyalty and support sustainable business growth. Therefore, this study will examine the extent to which the marketing communication elements used by Slice Coffee Medan can contribute to increasing customer interest and providing competitive advantage amidst the increasingly tight competition in the culinary business. The results of this study are expected to provide valuable contributions, both academically and practically. Academically, this study aims to enrich the study of marketing communication in the culinary industry, especially in the context of the coffee shop business in Indonesia. Meanwhile, practically, the findings of this study can be a guide for Slice Coffee Medan and other culinary business actors in developing more effective marketing communication strategies that are in line with customer needs in the digital era. By implementing the right marketing communication strategy, the coffee shop business can not only increase customer interest but also build long-term loyalty which is the main key to maintaining competitiveness in an increasingly competitive industry.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used is a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was chosen because it aims to deeply understand the marketing communication strategy implemented by Slice Coffee Medan in attracting customer interest. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore the views and experiences of consumers and management in the context of coffee marketing. According to Kotler and Keller (2012), qualitative research is very useful for digging deeper information about consumer behavior and effective marketing strategies. In this context, this study will involve in-depth interviews with Slice Coffee owners and managers, as well as surveys of customers to get their views on the communication strategies implemented. This study will also involve direct observation at the Slice Coffee location.

This observation aims to see how the interaction between staff and customers, as well as how the atmosphere and design of the cafe can affect customer interest. According to Sihombing and Siregar (2022), a comfortable and attractive cafe atmosphere can improve customer experience, which in turn can influence their purchasing decisions. Therefore, this observation will provide additional insight into the factors that influence customer interest in Slice Coffee. The data sources in this study consist of two types, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with the owners and managers of Slice Coffee, as well as with customers who visit the cafe. In-depth interviews aim to gain information about the marketing communication strategies implemented, including the use of social media, promotions, and interactions with customers. According to Pratama and Sarudin (2024), in-depth interviews can

provide deeper insight into individual perceptions and experiences related to products and services.

Data collection techniques in this study were carried out through several methods, namely in-depth interviews, surveys, and observations. In-depth interviews are one of the main techniques used to gain information from the owners and managers of Slice Coffee. In this interview, the researcher will ask open-ended questions that allow the informant to explain in detail about the marketing communication strategies implemented. According to Savetsila (2018), in-depth interviews can provide a deeper understanding of individual views and experiences related to the research topic. Researchers will also conduct a survey of customers who visit Slice Coffee. This survey will use a questionnaire consisting of questions related to customer experience, their perceptions of marketing strategies, and their purchasing interests. By using the survey method, researchers can collect data from a large number of respondents, so that the results can be more representative. This is in line with research by Hidayati (2020) which shows that surveys can provide quantitative data that is useful for further analysis.

Data validity testing is an important step in qualitative research to ensure that the data obtained is reliable and valid. In this study, several techniques will be used to test the validity of the data, including triangulation, member checking, and audit trail. Triangulation is done by comparing data obtained from various sources, such as interviews, surveys, and observations. In this way, researchers can ensure that the findings produced are consistent and unbiased (Rahmawati, 2019).

Member checking is another technique used to test the validity of the data. After the initial analysis is carried out, the researcher will return the interview results to the informants for feedback. Informants will be asked to verify whether the researcher's interpretation of their data is accurate. This technique helps ensure that the views and experiences of informants have been correctly represented in the study (Sari, 2019; Dalimunthe, 2024).

Audit trails will also be applied to increase the transparency and reliability of the study. This involves clear documentation of the data collection and analysis process, including decisions made during the study. By keeping detailed records, researchers can show how conclusions were drawn and why certain methods were chosen. This will help readers understand and assess the validity of the research (Fitria, 2020).

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Utilization of Social Media Platforms

One of the most prominent findings is the strategic use of Instagram and TikTok as the main communication channels for Slice Coffee Medan. Through these platforms, the brand shares high-quality visual content showcasing its products, café ambiance, customer reviews, and behind-the-scenes stories. A concrete

example is the “Slice Signature Challenge” campaign on TikTok, where customers were encouraged to create content with their favorite Slice menu item. This user-generated content was not only shared widely but also boosted engagement, resulting in a 25% increase in followers and a 17% spike in first-time visits during the campaign period. This aligns with Belch and Belch’s (2018) view that integrated social media campaigns can significantly increase brand awareness and influence consumer behavior by creating interactive experiences (Harianto et al., 2023).

A concrete and impactful example of this strategy is the “Slice Signature Challenge” campaign on TikTok, where customers were invited to create short videos featuring their favorite Slice Coffee menu item. Participants often showcased how they enjoyed their drinks with friends or highlighted the aesthetic appeal of the café’s interior. The campaign quickly gained traction, achieving a 25% increase in Instagram followers and a 17% rise in first-time customer visits within one month. This surge in engagement illustrates how user-generated content (UGC) can act as a form of social proof and extend the brand’s reach through peer-to-peer influence. It also demonstrates how interactive campaigns can transform passive audiences into active brand advocates.

This practice reflects Belch and Belch’s (2018) assertion that integrated social media campaigns—those which combine brand messaging with consumer interaction—are effective not only in boosting awareness but also in shaping positive consumer behavior. By offering a platform where customers can engage, express themselves, and feel seen, Slice Coffee Medan transforms its social media presence into a participatory marketing ecosystem. In this way, the brand is not merely speaking to its audience, but actively co-creating value and community with them (Pravitha, 2013).

Visual Content as a Marketing Tool

Visual aesthetics are central to Slice Coffee’s strategy. The interior design of the café is intentionally curated to be “Instagrammable,” featuring cozy corners, natural lighting, and minimalist furniture. This environment encourages visitors to take and share photos, thereby functioning as organic marketing agents. For instance, a customer’s viral post on Instagram showing a uniquely served “Slice Avocado Latte” led to a threefold increase in demand for that menu item over the next month. This type of indirect promotion illustrates Kotler and Keller’s (2012) theory that customer experience—when amplified through visual storytelling—serves as a powerful branding mechanism.

A notable illustration of this strategy is the “Slice Signature Challenge” on TikTok, a campaign that encouraged customers to post creative videos with their favorite Slice Coffee menu item. Many participants creatively highlighted their coffee moments, often emphasizing the aesthetic presentation and café vibe. As a result, the campaign significantly increased brand visibility—driving a 25%

growth in Instagram followers and a 17% increase in first-time visits during the activation period. This clearly illustrates the power of user-generated content (UGC) in creating organic traction and community-led promotion. Such outcomes align with Belch and Belch's (2018) perspective on integrated marketing communications, where interactive campaigns effectively boost consumer engagement, elevate brand recall, and influence purchasing decisions by fostering a sense of participation and authenticity.

Complementing the digital strategy, visual aesthetics play a central role in enhancing customer experience and driving engagement both online and offline (Humaizi et al., 2024). The interior of Slice Coffee is intentionally designed to be visually appealing and "Instagrammable," featuring cozy seating arrangements, natural lighting, pastel color schemes, and minimalist decor. This intentional aesthetic design does not merely serve functional purposes but strategically transforms the physical space into a content-friendly environment. Customers are naturally drawn to photograph their experiences, effectively becoming organic brand ambassadors through their social media posts.

For example, one viral Instagram post from a customer showcasing the uniquely presented "Slice Avocado Latte"—a drink served in a glass bowl with layered green and cream foam—captured widespread attention. Within days, the post gained hundreds of shares and led to a threefold increase in orders for the item over the following month. This case exemplifies what Kotler and Keller (2012) describe as the power of experience-driven marketing, where the physical and emotional consumption of a product, when amplified through visual storytelling, can significantly strengthen brand positioning and consumer attachment.

Targeted Promotions and Market Segmentation

Slice Coffee frequently implements tailored promotional campaigns such as "Buy 1 Get 1" for students on weekdays and exclusive loyalty cards for frequent visitors. These promotions are specifically designed for their dominant customer demographic: students and young professionals aged 18–30 who are price-sensitive but digitally active (Sikumbang et al., 2024). An illustrative case involved a partnership with local campus influencers. Slice Coffee offered them free drinks in exchange for Instagram stories featuring the café. The result was a noticeable increase in foot traffic from students at Universitas Sumatera Utara, proving the effectiveness of collaborative micro-influencer marketing in reaching niche market segments (Mardiana, 2022).

These promotions are carefully aligned with consumer behavior patterns identified through observational data and informal customer feedback. For instance, weekday afternoons—typically a lull period for many cafés—have become busier as students take advantage of the discounts to study, socialize, or simply spend time in a conducive environment with Wi-Fi and charging stations. The strategic timing of these promotions not only boosts short-term sales but also

fosters long-term behavioral shifts, encouraging habitual visits among young customers (Ritonga et al., 2024).

A compelling example of this strategy's effectiveness is Slice Coffee's collaborative campaign with local campus influencers, particularly from Universitas Sumatera Utara. Selected student influencers were offered complimentary drinks in exchange for posting Instagram stories or reels highlighting their visits to the café. These posts typically featured aesthetic shots of drinks, the ambiance of the venue, and personal endorsements. The campaign resulted in a notable increase in foot traffic from university students, especially during lunch breaks and early evenings, confirming the value of micro-influencer marketing in penetrating niche segments.

This approach illustrates the brand's responsiveness to the contemporary media consumption patterns of its audience and its ability to translate digital visibility into physical engagement. It also reinforces the insight that modern consumers are more likely to trust peer recommendations and authentic content over traditional advertising. As such, Slice Coffee's ability to integrate promotions with user-based credibility mechanisms serves as a competitive advantage in a crowded marketplace where attention is fragmented and loyalty is hard-earned.

Interactive Engagement and Relationship Building

Beyond promotional content, Slice Coffee also prioritizes responsive and two-way communication. Customers who tag the café or provide feedback on social media often receive personalized replies or reposts, creating a sense of inclusion and appreciation. This humanized interaction encourages repeat visits and fosters emotional attachment (Ritonga et al., 2024). For example, one customer shared a story about how the café staff responded to her complaint about a delayed order with a free drink and a handwritten apology note. She then praised this gesture on social media, which generated supportive comments and enhanced the café's public image. This supports Cutlip et al. (2013), who argue that public relations efforts anchored in empathy and responsiveness can amplify customer loyalty.

A key aspect of this strategy is the café's active presence on social media. Customers who tag Slice Coffee in their stories or posts often receive personalized replies, emojis, or reposts, signaling that their voices are heard and appreciated. This seemingly simple gesture contributes to a broader sense of inclusion and belonging within the brand community. Such interactions are not automated or generic but are crafted to reflect a human touch, reinforcing the perception of the brand as approachable, attentive, and socially aware.

An illustrative incident involved a customer who publicly shared her disappointment on Instagram about a delayed drink order during a busy weekend. Rather than ignoring or issuing a standard apology, the Slice Coffee team responded promptly with a direct message, offered a complimentary beverage, and even provided a handwritten apology note upon her next visit. The customer

was so impressed by this personal approach that she posted a follow-up story expressing gratitude, which was met with numerous supportive comments from her followers. This exchange not only reversed a negative experience into a positive brand moment, but also enhanced the café's public image as being empathetic and service-oriented.

This case exemplifies the principle emphasized by Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2013), who argue that public relations efforts grounded in empathy, transparency, and responsiveness are instrumental in fostering loyalty and goodwill. In a competitive industry where customer satisfaction is a key differentiator, such humanized communication practices can significantly influence repeat visits, positive word-of-mouth, and long-term emotional engagement (Ohorella et al., 2024). Ultimately, Slice Coffee's two-way communication model underscores the evolving expectations of modern consumers—who not only seek good products but also meaningful and respectful interactions with the brands they support.

Strategic Effectiveness and Behavioral Impact

The cumulative effect of these communication strategies has manifested in measurable outcomes. Based on internal reports provided by management and verified through customer feedback, the following results were observed: A 32% increase in new customer visits within six months of their intensified social media marketing. An average 25% rise in customer return rate, indicating improved loyalty. High levels of brand recall, as 71% of surveyed customers correctly identified Slice Coffee's tagline and promotional themes. These outcomes show how the synergy between visual branding, interactive communication, and targeted promotions contributes not only to attracting customers but also to converting them into loyal brand advocates.

According to internal reports shared by the management team and substantiated through post-visit surveys, the café experienced a 32% increase in new customer visits over a six-month period following the intensification of their social media marketing efforts. This growth coincided with the rollout of key campaigns such as the Slice Signature Challenge, targeted promotional bundles, and strategic collaborations with student influencers. These initiatives successfully elevated brand visibility and attracted first-time customers who were previously unfamiliar with the café.

In addition to attracting new visitors, the data revealed a 25% increase in customer return rates, a strong indicator of rising brand loyalty and satisfaction. This suggests that Slice Coffee is not only successful in creating initial interest, but also in delivering consistent brand experiences that motivate repeat patronage. Customer loyalty, in this case, is shaped by a combination of factors: aesthetically pleasing café environments, personalized communication, attractive loyalty programs, and the emotional resonance fostered through digital storytelling.

Furthermore, brand recall rates—measured through a short customer survey—show that 71% of respondents accurately remembered Slice Coffee’s tagline and the key themes of its promotional content. This figure reflects the strength of the café’s brand messaging consistency across digital and physical touchpoints. High brand recall is particularly valuable in the competitive F&B industry, where consumer choices are often impulsive and driven by recent impressions or peer influence.

These findings affirm that the synergy between visual branding, interactive communication, and targeted promotional strategies does more than just draw attention—it actively converts casual interest into long-term engagement. Slice Coffee’s approach exemplifies how a cohesive and customer-centric communication strategy can lead to measurable business growth, increased customer retention, and the cultivation of brand advocates who promote the café organically within their own social networks. The data further suggests that emotional branding, digital immersion, and humanized interaction are critical pillars for sustaining relevance and differentiation in a saturated market

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis reveals that Slice Coffee Medan has effectively implemented an integrated marketing communication strategy that capitalizes on digital platforms, visual aesthetics, targeted promotions, and personalized engagement. The strategic use of Instagram and TikTok has not only elevated the brand’s online presence but has also transformed customers into active co-creators of brand value through user-generated content such as the successful Slice Signature Challenge. These efforts have led to measurable outcomes including a 25% rise in customer return rate and a 32% increase in new visits within six months. The café’s emphasis on visual storytelling, both through social media and its Instagrammable interior design, has proven to be a powerful branding mechanism—amplifying customer experience and turning casual visitors into organic promoters. Moreover, promotional strategies tailored to the preferences of digitally active, price-sensitive youth—such as loyalty cards and student discounts—have effectively driven foot traffic and habitual behavior. Crucially, Slice Coffee’s approach to two-way communication and emotional branding sets it apart in a crowded marketplace. By responding personally to feedback, engaging with customers online, and resolving complaints with empathy, the brand has fostered a strong sense of community and loyalty. These relational dynamics are not only aligned with modern public relations theory but also with the expectations of today’s experience-driven consumers. Collectively, the synergy between interactive digital engagement, consistent visual identity, and customer-centric responsiveness has enabled Slice Coffee Medan to convert attention into sustained customer advocacy. This study underscores the importance of a holistic,

data-informed communication strategy in building brand relevance, emotional connection, and business sustainability in the highly competitive café industry.

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