Social Media as an Aceh Tourism Promotions Tool by Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism

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Abstract-- **Today's social media has become an excellent promotional tool for products and services, and, can be used to share stories or experiences about things or places they have visited, also the high level of social media access is one of the reasons why social media has great potential in advertising or promotional activities, especially in his case is tourism promotion. The aim of this study was to determine the form of tourism promotion through social media that has been applied by employees of the Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism. It uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques using interview and literature studies. Triangulation was carried out by interviewing five employees of Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism, and observations on social media own by Aceh Cultural and Tourism Agency. The results show that the form of promotional activities through social media carried out by the Aceh Culture and Tourism Agency uses eight preparatory steps for publication on social media so that promotions produced has high quality, informative and up to date, The suggestions given is for employees and also the Publication Team of Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism is to use more sophisticated analytic system to monitor the progress of social media and utilizing paid applications so they can measure and monitor all activities that happened on their social media.**

Keywords—social media; promotion; tourism; Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism

I. INTRODUCTION

The existence of social media has totally influenced the individual's life today in various ways. Social media involves from a massive sharing platform to an excellent promotional tool in promoting both products and services. Besides, it can be used to share stories and experiences in, or even to search some exotic places as tourist destinations across the globe.

The changing of advertising patterns as well as promotional activities from conventional mass media such as newspapers and television into digital media should no longer need to be doubt on nowadays. The high level of social media access is one of the reasons why the media has great potential in advertising or promotional activities. According to the data results of a survey conducted by Indonesian Internet Providers Service Association in 2016 showed that most of Indonesians accessed the social media. Dealing with Indonesia total population of 256.2 million people, it is estimated that if there are 132.7 million people use the internet only and the rest of 129.2 million people or 97.4% use the internet to access the social media. In addition, there are 128.4 million people of Indonesians also use the internet to access various types of entertainment, showing a percentage of 96.8%, and 96.4% users access the news content, ranked as much as 127.9 million people (APJII, 2016).

Promotion through social media can reach tourists wider, and simultaneously all over the world. Moreover, the information shared through the media can be accessed by anyone who needs anything related to the information about tourism. The opportunity to share the information through social media has a greater impact than non-digital media, information or promotion does not have a barrier, so the targeted tourist can access it as long as they are able to access the internet.

The use of social media in holding tourism activities is very beneficial for Aceh because it has a variety of promoting resources. Thus, people should know and be able to visit it. Based on the data in the field, it has been used for two years by the Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism Aceh as a promotional medium for tourism necessity. However, the social media managed by the Department won the awards of Indonesia Enchantment Award in 2017 as the 2nd winner of digital tourism promotion category through Twitter's social media. This shows that the social media account owned by Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism has received great attention from the community and may still be improved for various other social media.

Fortunately, there are some benefits for users who use social media as promotional media, especially if it is operated at least by the local government agency and the provincial government. Rahmadani stated that the reason they use social media as a promotion tool because it has an advantage in the level of efficiency, the institution only spread out certain information and then let the people continue, disseminate, and engage in the promotion activities. The promotion through social media is also assisted by Aceh Tourism Ambassadors and the GenPI Aceh community which to continue or share on their personal social media.

In promoting procedure, it takes content preparation, delivery methods, and clear targets so that the spread information can attract several tourists as targeted. Different social media should also be treated differently in the process of promotion because different influences and delivery methods on different social media can produce different results. The researcher only chooses two social media to be researched of several social media owned by Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism because based on the previous observations, the researcher found that many followers and posts made by the relevant institutions. Therefore, only two social media were selected to be chosen in this research compared to other social media, including Twitter and Instagram. Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism's official Twitter account page named @aceh_disbudpar with a total of 6,522 followers and 6,986 tweets and Instagram account named @disbudpar_aceh with 17,700 followers within 915 pictures and videos.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Promotion

Promotion is an activity to offer or to provide information to the public or consumers about a product or service that exists to attract consumers from the community to buy or to use the product offered. Thus, the activity is expected to increase sales from whatever product or service they offer.

Goerge and Michael Belch (2003: 16) provide the following definition of promotion: "Promotion has been defined as the coordination of all seller-initiated efforts to set up channels of information and persuasion in order to sell goods and services or promote an idea."

From the definition above, it can be understood that promotion is defined as the coordination of all sellers who start a business to prepare information channels and persuasion to sell goods and services or promote an idea. The main purpose of the promotion is clearly to provide information, to influence, and to persuade potential customers to buy or even just remember the product or service offered. Therefore, promotional activities need media so far.

B. Tourism

In the Republic of Indonesia Law, number 10 of 2009 concerning of Tourism, it is explained that "tourism" is a travel activity carried out by a person or group of people by visiting certain places for recreational purposes, personal development, or learning the unique attraction of a visited place in a short trip. Besides, tourists are interpreted as people who do tourism. And then. tourism is defined as various kinds of tourism activities that are supported by various facilities and services provided by the community, entrepreneurs, and the government.

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), tourism is the activity of a person who travels to or lives in a place outside his usual environment for no more than one year continuously, for pleasure, business or other purposes. Tourism can be divided into several aspects, one of which is through the aspect of types, namely natural tourism, where activities are always related to nature, whether land or sea. On land, people can do activities such as camping, mountain climbing, nature preserved tours, etc. However, in the ocean, people can travel by surfing, swimming, diving, sailing, and so on. These types, of course, are chosen by tourists depending on their needs and on their interests. One thing for sure that can be done by providers is to maximize service, to provide adequate facilities and to provide the maximum possible experience for tourists who visit.

C. Social media

According to Van Dijk (in Nasrullah, 2016: 11), social media is a media platform that focuses on the existence of users who facilitate their activities and social collaboration. Therefore, social media can be seen as an online (facilitator) medium that strengthens relationships between users and social bonds.

Another perspective understanding of Nasrullah (2016: 11) social media can be interpreted as a medium on the internet that allows users to represent themselves or interact, work together, share, communicate with other users, and form social bonds visually. The beginning of the development of social media can be seen by the presence of e-mail in 1966. Then,

continued to develop until right now that have a high user level such as Instagram, Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

D. *Strategies, Tactics, and Planning on Social Media*

Referring to Luttrell (2015: 214-222), there are several models that can be used to create planning in promotional activities through social media by directly aligning results in harmony with the main objectives of the organization. Involving social media in promotional activities certainly requires good planning preparation, support, and application. Social media can be a place for customers to participate in various things related to the promoted products which are also useful for them if it can be correctly implemented. There are the steps of promotional panning procedure:

Step 1: Situation Statement—Develop a statement that outlines what the company wants to achieve and why

Step 2: Objectives—Objectives for social media plan will be easily described using SMART strategy: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely.

Step 3: Define the Audience—Social media effort should be directed toward a specific audience. Some campaign has multiple audiences depending on the objectives set forth in the campaign.

Step 4: Strategy—Describe how and why various campaign components will achieve the overall objectives.

Step 5: Tactics—Tactics have been divided into several social media area; each social media has its own tactics that can be used in the promotional process.

Step 6: Timeline—The objective, complexity, and timing of the campaign will dictate the timelines.

Step 7: Budget—Every social media plan requires a budget, it's related to all of the expenses related to the campaign in social media.

III. METHOD

A. *Method*

The research method used in this research is a Qualitative research method. This research is intended to understand the phenomenon of what is holistically experienced by the subject of research such as behavior, perception, motivation, actions, etc. Moreover, this study also intends to know the phenomenon by describing the form of words and languages in a special natural context and utilizing various natural methods (Moleong, 2014, p: 6).

Gorman and Clayton (in Santana, 2007, p: 29-30) state that the goal of qualitative work is to understand what is learned from the perspective of the incident itself and from the point of view. Basically, qualitative research processes the data from the direct context to describe events happened like in the real-life situation which means that this phenomenon seems to be attached. This study involves a participatory perspective in all its activities and uses induction in describing the phenomenon he observed.

B. *Sampling Technique*

This research uses purposive sampling; it is one of the non-random sampling techniques where the researcher determines the sampling by specifying specific characteristics that are suitable with the objectives of the study so that it is expected to answer the research problems. Those characteristics are; 1) Knowing the process of promotional activities through social media, 2) Engaging in promotional activities through social media, 3) Engaging in the stages of planning promotional activities through social media, 4) Knowing the development of promotional activities through social media, 5) Engage in evaluating promotional activities through social media and 6) Involved for the past two years in promotional activities through social media.

Based on predetermined criteria, the informants in this study are:
1. Head of Marketing for the Aceh Culture and Tourism Agency
2. Head of Communication Development and Marketing Strategy Section of Aceh Culture and Tourism Agency
3. Members of the Aceh Culture and Tourism Office Publication Team

C. *Data collections.*

Data collections use Semi-structured interviews, this type of interviews use an interview protocol to guide the researcher through the interview process. While this also can incorporate any other conversational aspects, and mostly a guided conversation between the researcher and the informant. It does maintain some structure, but it also provides the researcher with the ability to probe the participant for additional details that need to elaborate regarding the research. The researcher also uses a literature study to add information needed to be related to the number of tourist visits both national and international tourist and various other information that is useful to support the results of the research.

IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

It cannot be denied that the existence of social media and its own value in the community social media cannot be denied its existence has its own existence value in the community. Therefore, as social media or various types of internet-based media promotion, it is very helpful to support promotional activities especially in the case of tourism promotion activities of Aceh.

The coordination of planning strategies and tactics on social media has certainly been implemented and well-implemented by Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism in their social media, Twitter and Instagram. For additional evaluation activities, it has been well-conducted monthly by the Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism's Publication Team. They tend to show the data presentation of a written report addressed to the Department quarterly. It shows a very good preparation both Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism in general and its Publication Team in particular.
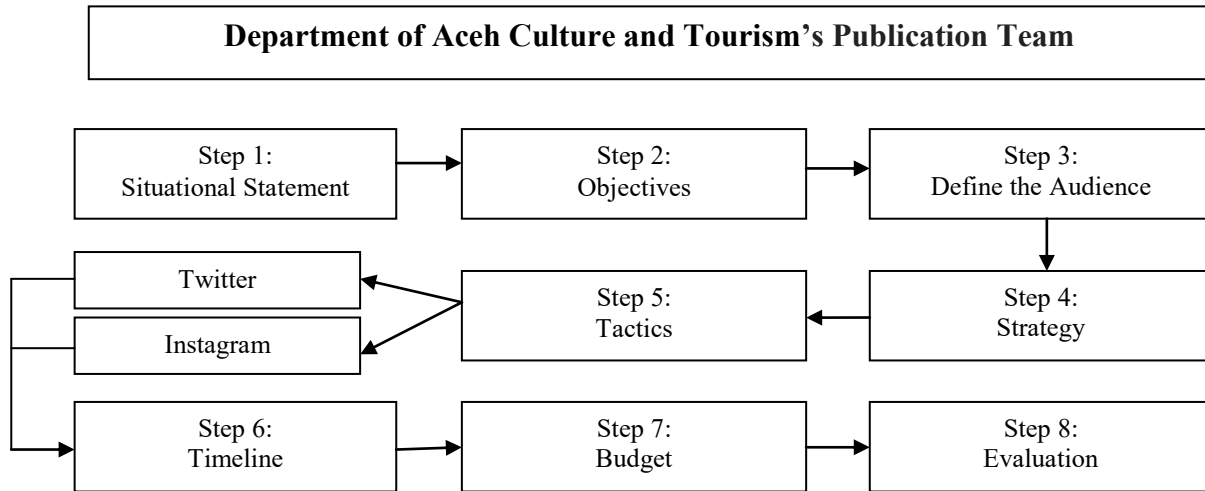

Figure 1. Promotional Stages Model through Social Media

The promotion stage model shows all the stages carried out by Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism in preparing promotions through social media, *Twitter* and *Instagram*. The preparation of promotion begins with setting the situation which is determining what is to be conveyed from the promotion through social media. It is needed in order to determine the next stage of the specific goals. In the second phase, the determination of the objectives of promotional activities through social media. The Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism's publication team must have more specific goals related to the promotion of social media which from the research results is known to increase public awareness of the tourism potential in Aceh, as well as also provides information regarding tourism destination opportunities that are worth to visit in Aceh.

Then, the third stage refers to the determination of the potential audience. The determination of the audience is also based on a clear calculation. The audience can be categorized into several types such as based on age, the place of origin of tourists, the type of work, or even the interests of prospective tourists who will visit Aceh. Therefore, by clearly setting the audience, it may have an impact on the development of a promotional delivery message that wants to convey. The Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism's publication team admitted that in every uploading picture or video on *Twitter* and *Instagram* had been determined a clear target audience so that the disseminated promotions were delivered.

Figure 2. The use of specific tagline into a different audience

Data published by Indonesian Internet Providers Service Association reported in 2016, Indonesian internet users found that around 75.8% of the Indonesian population who use the Internet are in the range of 25-34 years. It ranked 10-24 years of users amounting to 75.5% based on their work. 89.7% of internet users are university students followed by 69.8% are students. Then, Indonesian internet users who also access social media when using the internet, showing a total of 97.4% or around 129.2 million people. Most of them use smartphones to access the internet with a total amount of 47.6% or 63.1 million people. Thus, if the classification carried out by the publication team is maximal and successful, it can be concluded that most of the prospective tourism visitors in Aceh are people with the age range of 10-34 years, most of them are students and university students.

After determining a specific audience, the next step is to determine a suitable strategy to be used in certain stages of promotion, including a selection of suitable social media, use of specific hashtags, and clear reasons for what and how a promotional activity through social media is carried out. Then, go find a more specific stage in order to understand what tactics to be used. At this stage, the difference of social media becomes a very calculated matter in its determination; one tactic is almost impossible for two or three social media because social media has its own uniqueness, for example on *Instagram*. The more we upload the content or, the higher engagement or interaction that comes from the content that we have, the more often the account will be seen on Instagram followers' homepage. In contrast to Twitter, the content seen on the homepage is the latest upload, regardless of a large number of interactions. Thus, after being discussed in the research results section, it was revealed that the Publication Team of the Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism had first distinguished the tactics used based on social media used for publication.

Figure 3. Picture color style for online post

The next step is determining the timeline that is related to how long the promotion with social media will be carried out. It is known that the use of social media by Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism is intended long-term planning for promotional activities, so the timeline is also followed it indeed. Dealing with the promotion of activities, if there are tourism activities specifically held in the Province of Aceh, the timeline for the promotion will also be specifically specified. Referring to the prospective tourists who are expected to be present in tourism-related activities. The wider the range, the longer timeline to be used such as when international tourism activities are held, the promotion timeline through social media can be up to a year, but if the scope is only domestically national, the promotion on social media is carried out only a month before the activity begins.

In the budgeting stage, the results of the study revealed that Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism did not set a specific budget in promotional activities through social media, but the Department budgeted the funds, in general, to be used by the publication team. It means that they employed a-third-person publication team and paid their salaries regularly. However, researchers did not find any special funds issued to optimize social media as a means of promoting tourism in Aceh, so there is a possibility that the budget for the use of social media is situational depending on the needs of the publication team as the person in charge to take responsibility for social media of Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism.

And the last is the implementation of the evaluation system, this step was found later on the research process. On this step, the researcher appreciates the level of activity of the evaluation activities carried out every month by Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism's publication team. The more frequent evaluations are carried out, the more weaknesses, strengths, and improvements of social media use can be continuously monitored. Furthermore, a report is very important in the evaluation because it needs to be considerate as a routine report for Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism every 3 months.
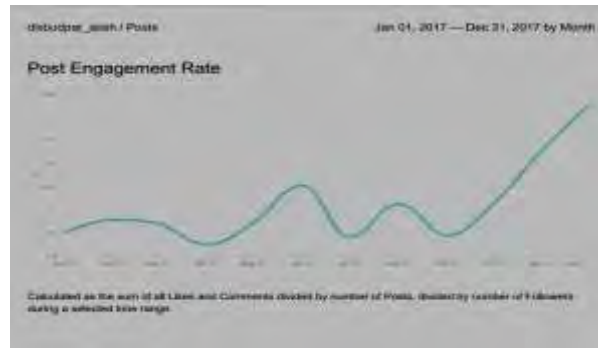
Figure 4. Evaluations result on Instagram

The significant benefits of using the social media hold a very great impact on tourism in the province of Aceh because the number of visitors both domestic and foreign tourists was perceived to continue to increase and reach the target of existing visits in 2017. Based on data obtained from the Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism shows that there is a significant expansion of visitors starting from the year since social media used until today.

TABLE I.   NUMBER OF TOURISM AFTER THE SOCIAL MEDIA USED

Month/year	Number of Tourists who visit Aceh	
	Domestic	Foreigner
January-December 2015	1.662.528 Tourists	54.588 Tourists
January-December 2016	2.077.797 Tourists	76.452 Tourists
January-December 2017	2.288.625 Tourists	75.758 Tourists

Source: Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism (2018)

From the data above, the number of visitors has significantly increased both domestic and foreign tourists each year after social media used and optimized between 2016-2017. However, in 2017, according to one of Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism employees stated that there was a small number of foreign tourist arrivals due to weather conditions that were not supportive when international activities were carried out so that visitors from foreign tourists could not be present and involved in the activity.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study through interview and literature study, the researchers concluded that the forms of promotional activities through social media were greatly carried out by the staffs of Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism. Moreover, the activity is always very adequate, and full preparation of the publication team to update information related to tourism in the province of Aceh can be considerably appreciated. They have done their best through the promotion process on social media using eight preparatory steps so that the promotion shows good quality and a straightforward target. The suggestions given are for employees, and also the Publication Team of Department of Aceh Culture and Tourism is to use the more sophisticated analytic system to monitor the progress of social media and utilizing paid applications, so they can measure and monitor all activities that happened on their social media.

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