

## The Role of Social Media in Amplifying Experiential Marketing (Case Study in Indonesia)

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**ABSTRACT:** In the contemporary marketing landscape, experiential marketing and social media fusion have emerged as pivotal for brand engagement and consumer interaction. This study delves into the intricate dynamics that underlie the amalgamation of social media platforms with experiential marketing strategies. The introduction provides a comprehensive overview of the growing significance of this integration in the current marketing paradigm, highlighting its potential impact on brand-consumer relationships and market positioning. A qualitative research approach was adopted to explore the multifaceted dimensions of social media's role in amplifying experiential marketing. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with a diverse sample of consumers, industry experts, and marketing professionals. The findings reveal myriad ways social media serves as an effective amplifier of experiential marketing initiatives. Consumer testimonials and engagement metrics underscore the heightened emotional resonance and brand recall facilitated by social media interactions. Additionally, the study identifies key factors influencing the success of experiential campaigns in the digital realm, shedding light on the symbiotic relationship between online platforms and immersive brand experiences. The discussion section interprets the results within the context of existing theoretical frameworks in marketing and consumer behavior. The dynamic landscape of experiential marketing in Indonesia is witnessing a transformative shift guided by the adept utilization of social media. By navigating demographic diversity, internet access limitations, and cost constraints, brands can unlock the full potential of experiential marketing through social media, creating lasting impressions and connections with their target audience.

**Keywords:** Experiential Marketing, Social Media, Qualitative Investigation, Consumer Engagement.



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## INTRODUCTION

In the ever-changing world of modern marketing, experiential marketing and social media fusion have become a key focus, influencing how brands engage with consumers. Experiential marketing

involves directly involving consumers in an experience related to a brand or product. The primary aim is to forge stronger connections between consumers and brands, ultimately boosting brand awareness and sales (Graham et al., 2015). There are various approaches to experiential marketing, such as organizing events, appearances, exhibitions, and interactive content. For instance, a car company might organize a test drive event for a new model, allowing consumers to experience the product firsthand. Similarly, a retail company might conduct cooking classes to introduce new food products, providing an engaging way to boost sales. Another example could be a clothing company hosting a music concert to promote a new collection, offering a unique way to capture consumer attention and enhance brand recognition. Experiential marketing is an effective strategy for businesses seeking to build stronger customer relationships, increase brand awareness, boost sales, and enhance customer satisfaction (Shaw et al., 2005). Nevertheless, the successful execution of experiential marketing demands careful planning. Businesses must comprehend customers' needs and preferences to create meaningful and memorable experiences (Hanaysha, 2022).

The core concept of experiential marketing revolves around the notion that consumers are more inclined to be interested in and recall information when they directly experience it, as opposed to information conveyed solely through verbal or visual means (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Experiential marketing actively engages consumers in experiences linked to a brand or product, aiming to establish stronger relationships and boost brand awareness and sales. Directly experienced information tends to be more memorable for consumers because such experiences tap into their emotions and senses. Brands that offer meaningful and memorable experiences are more likely to attract consumer interest, as consumers seek a connection with the brands they value. Businesses leveraging experience-based marketing can craft experiences that resonate with consumers, enhancing consumer interest in the brand (Kolb, 2015). Consumers are not only likely to remember these meaningful experiences but are also more inclined to share them with others. Positive and impressive experiences are easily shared, aiding businesses in increasing brand awareness and capturing the attention of potential new customers. This underscores the power of experiential marketing in creating lasting impressions on consumers and harnessing the potential of word-of-mouth promotion for brand growth (Vildayanti, 2020).

Experience-based marketing boasts several advantages compared to other marketing approaches. Firstly, it proves more effective in cultivating relationships with customers. By directly involving consumers in an experience tied to a brand or product, experiential marketing allows businesses to build stronger connections. Customers can experience the tangible value and benefits of the brand or product, fostering a deeper relationship. Secondly, experiential marketing is more impressive and memorable. Experiences directly felt by consumers are more enduring and impactful than information conveyed verbally or visually. This is because such experiences tap into consumers' emotions and senses (Schmitt, n.d.). Moreover, experiential marketing is more accessible to share. Positive and remarkable experiences are readily shared by consumers, facilitating increased brand awareness and attracting the attention of potential new customers. For example, a clothing company might organize sewing classes to introduce a new clothing collection, providing an engaging way to boost sales. Similarly, a travel company could host virtual tours of their tourist destinations, presenting a unique method to capture consumer attention and enhance brand awareness. Even a technology company might organize a coding competition for kids, offering an exciting way to engage the younger generation and increase brand awareness.

Experiential marketing emerges as a highly effective strategy for businesses seeking to cultivate stronger customer relationships and elevate brand awareness (Lim et al., 2023; Martinez-Ruiz & Moser, 2019).

Social media plays a crucial role in experiential marketing as it is a versatile platform for creating, sharing, and optimizing customer experiences. Its interactive nature enables companies to build more personal relationships with customers. Companies can actively listen to customer feedback, address inquiries, and provide support through social media, fostering a dynamic and responsive connection (Berry, n.d.). The platform also proves instrumental in expanding brand awareness by reaching a broader audience. Companies utilize social media to share compelling and informative content about their products or services, enhancing engagement. Moreover, social media facilitates the creation of interactive experiences for customers. Companies can organize contests, quizzes, and other events to captivate and involve their audience (Hafez, 2022). Additionally, social media is a valuable tool for collecting customer data and providing insights into their preferences and needs. This data becomes a foundation for companies to refine and enhance the overall customer experience. For instance, a restaurant company might leverage social media for a food photo contest, offering an engaging way to involve customers and boost brand awareness (Hanaysha, 2022). Similarly, a clothing company can utilize social media to share video tutorials on styling their products, enhancing the customer's experience with the brand. Additionally, a travel company can leverage social media to share captivating travel stories from their customers, inspiring others to embark on similar journeys (Couwenberg et al., 2017).

Experience marketing is a strategic approach involving consumers directly in experiences linked to a brand or product. The underlying assumption is that consumers are more likely to recall information they experience firsthand compared to information conveyed verbally or visually. From a marketing theory standpoint, experience-based marketing falls under relationship marketing, focusing on fostering more robust connections between consumers and brands to enhance customer loyalty and satisfaction. Additionally, it aligns with customer experience theory, which emphasizes creating pleasant and memorable experiences to increase customer satisfaction and value (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

Petty and Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), formulated in 1986, primarily addresses persuasion and attitude change. Although ELM does not explicitly focus on experiential marketing, its insights can be applied to understand how individuals process information and form attitudes in the context of immersive brand experiences. The model introduces the dual routes of persuasion: the central route involves deep cognitive processing, while the peripheral route relies on cues like emotions and aesthetics. Experiential marketing can leverage both routes by creating immersive experiences that engage individuals intellectually and emotionally, aiming for a holistic impact on attitudes. ELM emphasizes factors like elaboration, cognitive and affective responses, involvement, peripheral cues, and central and peripheral route processing. Experiential marketing aligns with these principles by seeking to increase elaboration through engaging experiences, considering the significance of peripheral cues in events, and recognizing that individuals may process information differently based on their motivation and ability. By creating enduring and positive brand attitudes, experiential marketing aligns with ELM's notion that attitudes formed

through deep cognitive processing are more resistant to change (Cacioppo et al., n.d.; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Grönroos (1994) has significantly shaped the landscape of relationship marketing theory, introducing key assumptions and concepts that have become fundamental to the field (Grönroos, 1994). The core of Grönroos's framework is the notion of an Interaction and Relationship Continuum. He posits that marketing activities should be seen as existing on a spectrum, ranging from isolated transactions to more interactive and relational exchanges. This conceptualization underscores the evolving nature of relationships in marketing, encouraging a shift towards more interactive and ongoing engagements. Central to Grönroos's contributions is that services should be perceived as processes rather than mere outcomes. This perspective emphasizes the importance of ongoing interactions and mutual adaptation between service providers and customers. Customer Perceived Value is a crucial concept, highlighting that customers evaluate the value of a service not only based on the outcome but also on the overall process and the quality of the relationship. Grönroos emphasizes that a mutual exchange of information and dialogue between customers and service providers is vital in relationship marketing, facilitating a deeper understanding of customer needs and preferences.

Trust and commitment are foundational elements in Grönroos's relationship marketing theory. Building and maintaining trust is essential for establishing enduring relationships, and commitment ensures the continuity of these relationships over time. Additionally, Grönroos underscores the link between service quality and relationship marketing, asserting that high-quality service delivery is pivotal in relationship building. The concepts of internal marketing, customer retention, and loyalty further highlight the holistic nature of Grönroos's relationship marketing framework, which focuses on fostering long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between service providers and customers.

According to relationship marketing theory from Gronroos (1994), a robust consumer-brand relationship enhances customer loyalty and satisfaction. Experiential marketing builds such relationships by actively involving consumers in brand-related experiences. Customer experience theory posits that customer experience significantly influences satisfaction and loyalty—experience-based marketing aids in crafting enjoyable and memorable experiences, elevating customer satisfaction and perceived value. Experience-based marketing effectively cultivates stronger consumer relationships and enhances satisfaction.

Various strategies can be employed for experience-based marketing, including events and exhibitions, entertaining appearances or shows, educational exhibitions or demonstrations, interactive content creation (such as videos or games), and experiential retail initiatives. The continuous evolution of experience-based marketing aligns with technological advancements and consumer behavior shifts. Consequently, companies must innovate consistently to create intriguing and memorable consumer experiences.

This study aims to thoroughly investigate the intricate dynamics involved in combining social media platforms with experiential marketing strategies. By exploring this relationship, the research seeks to reveal the fundamental mechanisms that shape how social media strengthens and

magnifies experiential marketing endeavors. The emphasis is on comprehending the interplay between these influential domains and clarifying how social media enhances the effectiveness of experiential marketing initiatives (Yin, 2012).

### METHOD

The research adopts a constructivist approach to align with the qualitative nature of the study, aiming to explore the intricate dynamics of integrating social media platforms with experiential marketing (R. C. Bogdan & Biklen, n.d.; R. Bogdan & Taylor, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding participants' subjective experiences and perspectives in the given context. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study prioritizes in-depth exploration and interpretation of the multifaceted dimensions surrounding the role of social media in amplifying experiential marketing. Qualitative methods allow a nuanced understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors (Moleong & Remaja Rosdakarya. Mulyana, 2006). The research utilizes a case study design to delve deeply into specific social media- experiential marketing integration instances. Case study techniques enable the examination of real- life scenarios, providing context-specific insights and contributing to the richness of the findings (Creswell, 2018; Guba & Lincoln, n.d.; Johnson & Stake, 2005).

This research conducted in-depth interviews with participants to gather detailed insights into their experiences, perceptions, and attitudes regarding integrating social media with experiential marketing. It also facilitated focus group discussions to encourage interaction and exploration of shared experiences among participants. This method enhances the depth of qualitative data through group dynamics. They were implementing strategies such as member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation to enhance the rigor and trustworthiness of the study. These measures contribute to the validity and reliability of the qualitative findings. They are acknowledging the researcher's influence and perspectives throughout the research process. Reflexivity is maintained to ensure transparency and account for potential biases in interpreting qualitative data. The combination of the constructivist approach, qualitative methodology, and case study techniques aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the role of social media in amplifying experiential marketing (Miles et al., 2014; Mulyana, 2006).

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The use of social media in experience-based marketing strategies in Indonesia is still developing but has shown a positive trend. Social media can be an effective tool to support experiential marketing, as it can be used to increase brand awareness. Social media content can help increase brand awareness by displaying information about a company's products, services, or experiences. Engaging and informative social media content can attract the attention of new consumers and encourage them to learn more about the company. Social media content that encourages consumers to purchase can increase sales of a company's products or services.

Disney pioneered one of the most renowned examples of experiential marketing with the opening of Disneyland in 1955 in Anaheim, California, United States. Founded by Walt Disney, Disneyland is not just an amusement park; it is a vision brought to life, aiming to offer people of all ages a haven for fun and adventure. From its inception, Disneyland was crafted as a place brimming with magic and imagination, swiftly claiming it as one of the world's most sought-after tourist destinations. This amusement park is a magical realm offering diverse rides, attractions, and shows, immersing visitors in a world rich with fantasy and adventure. Disney's lineup of iconic characters, including Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck, Goofy, and the beloved Disney.

Princesses, transcends age barriers, captivating the hearts of visitors. These characters stand as a significant draw for Disneyland's global audience. Over the years, Disneyland has welcomed millions worldwide, solidifying Disney as a symbol of magic, imagination, and happiness. The park's success is not merely about rides and attractions but creating an enchanting experience that resonates with people, making Disneyland more than a destination. It is a timeless embodiment of joy and wonder.

Lego, the well-known toy company, provides another notable example of experiential marketing through its creation of Legoland. Legoland, a theme park inspired by the Lego toy line, presents a range of Lego-themed rides, attractions, and shows. It has established its presence in various cities worldwide, including California, Florida, and Denmark. Legoland employs experiential marketing to craft enjoyable and lasting experiences for its visitors. The theme park offers diverse opportunities for visitors to engage with Lego, featuring rides designed to delight and challenge individuals of all ages. Popular attractions include The Dragon, The Pharaoh's Revenge, and The Lego Ninjago The Ride. Legoland also provides educational attractions, such as The Lego Factory, The Lego Miniland, and The Lego Mindstorms Lab, enabling visitors to delve into the history and intricacies of Lego. Additionally, the park hosts entertaining and educational shows like The Lego Movie 4D, The Lego City Stunt Show, and The Lego Friends Show. Legoland has emerged as one of the world's premier amusement parks, drawing millions of visitors annually and significantly elevating awareness of the Lego brand. The benefits derived from experiential marketing at Legoland encompass increased brand awareness, stronger customer relationships fostered by the park's fun and memorable experiences, and heightened sales through the popularity of Lego products available within the theme parks. Legoland's success highlights the effectiveness of experiential marketing in creating a compelling and immersive brand experience.

Companies harness these platforms to promote experience-based marketing in the current social media era. A recent illustration is Nike, the shoe company, in 2023. Nike utilized social media to amplify the Nike Air Max Day event, an annual celebration since 1987 commemorating the launch of the Air Max 1. The company crafted diverse content on social media, including videos, images, and blog posts, showcasing the activities planned for the Nike Air Max Day event. Social media was a pivotal channel for Nike to extend invitations to consumers, urging their participation. The Nike Air Max Day event featured various activities, encompassing music performances, exhibitions, and contests. In 2023, this global celebration spanned over 100 countries, drawing the participation of more than 1 million visitors and yielding a remarkable \$1 billion in sales of Nike products. Nike's strategic utilization of social media disseminated information about the event and actively engaged consumers, contributing to the event's substantial success in attendance and sales.

This example underscores the influential role of social media in modern marketing strategies, particularly in promoting experiential events and fostering widespread brand engagement.

In the Indonesian context, Indomie, one of the most popular instant food brands, has utilized social media to promote various events and experiences related to its brand. For example, Indomie once held an "Indomie Night" event, allowing consumers to enjoy Indomie together while watching a film or concert. Indomie also often holds contests and giveaways on social media to attract the attention of new consumers. The brand employs social media to promote experiential events like "Indomie Night," engaging consumers in communal experiences centered around enjoying Indomie while partaking in activities like film watching or concerts. This approach corresponds to the central route, as it involves a high level of consumer involvement, creating a direct and meaningful association between the brand and positive experiences.

Go-Jek is one of the largest technology companies in Indonesia. Go-Jek has utilized social media to promote the various experiences offered by its services. For example, Go-Jek once held a "Go-Jek Festival" event, allowing consumers to try various Go-Jek services for free. Go-Jek also often holds social campaigns on social media to increase public awareness about various important issues. Tokopedia is one of the largest e-commerce platforms in Indonesia. Tokopedia has utilized social media to promote the various experiences offered by its platform. For example, Tokopedia once held a "Tokopedia Play" event, which allowed consumers to play games and win prizes. Tokopedia also often holds promotional campaigns on social media to attract the attention of new consumers. Go-Jek strategically utilizes social media to promote its services through events like the "Go-Jek Festival," offering consumers the chance to experience various services for free. By integrating experiential elements, Go-Jek follows the central route, seeking to create a direct link between positive experiences and its brand. Additionally, Go-Jek's social campaigns addressing societal issues align with the peripheral route, as they indirectly aim to enhance brand perception by associating it with socially responsible initiatives. Tokopedia employs social media to showcase experiences related to its e-commerce platform, such as the "Tokopedia Play" event. This event, featuring games and prizes, aligns with the central route, emphasizing direct engagement and positive experiences with the platform. Moreover, Tokopedia's promotional campaigns on social media, designed to attract new consumers, also contribute to the peripheral route by creating positive brand associations.

Infinix is a smartphone brand from Indonesia. Infinix has held various smartphone events and experiences, such as product launch events. Infinix often holds product launch events to introduce its new products to the public. This event usually has various activities, such as gaming competitions, music concerts, and talk shows. Infinix also often holds community events to build relationships with its consumers. This event usually takes the form of a gathering or workshop. Infinix often collaborates with influencers to promote its products. This collaboration aims to reach more consumers. Infinix leverages social media for experiential marketing during product launch events, incorporating activities like gaming competitions and music concerts. These events follow the central route, engaging consumers directly in positive experiences related to the brand and its products. Infinix's collaboration with influencers to promote products introduces a peripheral route, leveraging social influence to create positive associations.

Wardah is one of the well-known cosmetic brands in Indonesia. Wardah has held various events and experiences related to beauty, such as beauty events. Wardah often holds beauty events, such as talk shows, workshops, and contests. This event aims to provide information and education about beauty to the public. Wardah collaborates with artists and influencers to promote its products. This collaboration aims to attract new consumers. Wardah also has a CSR program related to beauty, such as the "Wardah Beauty Class" program, which provides beauty training to women in remote areas. Wardah utilizes social media for beauty-related events and experiences, such as talk shows and workshops. These events, aimed at providing information and education about beauty, align with the central route, fostering a direct and meaningful connection between the brand and positive beauty-related experiences. Wardah's collaboration with artists and influencers, as well as its CSR program, adds a peripheral route, utilizing social influence and social responsibility to enhance brand perception indirectly.

With an area consisting of thousands of islands and an area of 1.905 million square kilometers, companies in Indonesia face several challenges in marketing their products to all provinces in Indonesia, including marketing using social media. Some of the challenges in using social media in experiential marketing strategies in Indonesia are (1) Demographic diversity: Indonesia is a country that is very diverse in terms of demographics, including age, gender, education, and location. It can be challenging for companies to create relevant experiences for all their consumers; (2) Internet access: Some Indonesians still do not have internet access, especially in rural areas. This can limit the reach of experiential marketing strategies that leverage social media; (3) Cost: Hosting a social media-based event or experience can cost significant money. This can be a challenge for companies with limited budgets.

One significant challenge in utilizing social media for experiential marketing in Indonesia is the prevalence of demographic diversity in the country. Indonesia boasts a rich tapestry of demographics, encompassing variations in age, gender, education, and geographic location. Crafting experiential marketing strategies that resonate with such a diverse audience proves challenging. Companies must navigate the intricate nuances of each demographic segment to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of their social media-based experiences. This demands a meticulous understanding of the cultural and contextual factors influencing consumer behavior across different demographic groups.

Another noteworthy challenge lies in the accessibility of the internet. While the digital landscape in Indonesia has experienced considerable growth, some regions, mainly rural areas, still face limitations in internet access. This digital divide impedes the seamless reach of experiential marketing initiatives that rely on social media platforms. Companies may find it challenging to connect with a broader audience. They may need to explore alternative strategies or channels to ensure inclusivity and maximize the impact of their experiential marketing efforts.

Cost is a significant hurdle for companies leveraging social media for experiential marketing in Indonesia. Hosting events or experiences on social media platforms often involves substantial financial investments. From creating engaging content to managing online interactions and promotions, the expenses can add up. This financial barrier poses a challenge for companies with limited budgets, potentially limiting their ability to execute large-scale or high-impact social media-

based experiential marketing campaigns. Balancing cost-effectiveness with the desire for impactful and memorable experiences becomes crucial in navigating this challenge.

According to Pine and Gilmore's (1998) theory, addressing social media for experiential marketing challenges in Indonesia involves strategic solutions to enhance consumer engagement and brand experiences. The issue of demographic diversity can be mitigated by implementing segmented experiences. Brands should tailor their experiential marketing strategies to specific demographic segments, considering factors such as age, gender, education, and location. This approach ensures that the experiences resonate with target audiences' diverse preferences and interests, fostering relevance and sustained engagement.

To tackle the challenge of limited internet access, brands can adopt a hybrid approach by integrating online and offline components into their experiential campaigns. This allows consumers with restricted internet access to participate in events through alternative channels, such as physical locations or community gatherings. By diversifying the accessibility of experiential marketing, brands can reach a broader audience and create inclusive brand experiences.

Addressing cost constraints involves leveraging collaborative partnerships and optimizing available resources. Brands can seek alliances with other companies, influencers, or local organizations to share costs and resources for experiential marketing initiatives. Additionally, optimizing the use of social media platforms by strategically selecting features and formats aligned with the budget ensures creative and impactful campaigns. By focusing on innovation rather than extravagant spending, brands can navigate cost challenges while delivering compelling and memorable experiences to Indonesian consumers.

## CONCLUSION

The evolution of experiential marketing in Indonesia, mainly through social media platforms, is a promising trend with substantial potential for enhancing brand awareness. Social media is a potent tool for disseminating engaging and informative content, capturing the attention of new consumers, and fostering more profound connections. Drawing inspiration from global success stories like Disneyland and Legoland, brands in Indonesia, such as Indomie, Go-Jek, Tokopedia, Infinix, and Wardah, strategically leverage experiential marketing through social media channels. These companies create events and experiences that align with the central and peripheral routes of experiential marketing, engaging consumers directly and indirectly to forge meaningful associations between their brands and positive experiences.

However, this trajectory is not without its challenges. The demographic diversity in Indonesia poses a complex hurdle, requiring brands to tailor their social media-based experiences to resonate with the varied preferences of different demographic segments. Additionally, issues of limited internet access, especially in rural areas, and the associated costs of hosting social media events are significant barriers that companies must navigate. To overcome these challenges, strategic solutions are imperative. Companies can adopt segmented experiences, ensuring relevance across diverse demographics while exploring hybrid approaches that integrate online and offline components to overcome internet access limitations. Collaborative partnerships and resource

optimization emerge as critical strategies to address the financial constraints of social media-based experiential marketing.

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