

EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING STRATEGY TO ENHANCE THE INTEREST OF VISITORS OF LIWA BOTANICAL GARDEN

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ABSTRACT

Liwa Botanical garden is an ecotourism object which prioritizes the development of conservation and protection of biodiversity. Liwa Botanical gardens, located in West Lampung Regency, is located on the ridge of the Bukit Barisan Mountains with cool air and beautiful panoramas, so that visitors will be spoiled by beautiful natural scenery. This is a good potential to get visitors who want to enjoy natural beauty tourism. The study aims to determine the effect of experiential marketing strategies on public interest in visiting the Liwa Botanical gardens. This research is a quantitative research by conducting a survey to visitors of Liwa Botanical garden randomly. The results of the study simultaneously use sense, feel, think, act, and relate as variables which are significant to people's interest in visiting the Liwa Botanical gardens. The findings of this study are that visitors are strongly influenced by the cool atmosphere of the botanical gardens, and the experience is pleasant and gives an impression during their visit.

Keyword: experiential, marketing, interest

INTRODUCTION

Tourism sector plays an important role in increasing the income of one area. One of the sectors affected by the Covid-19 pandemic is the tourism sector, where the number of visits has decreased drastically and the tourism sector has suffered less and less visitors due to the health protocol. The government issued a policy of restricting people's movements on a macro and micro basis so that people's mobility was limited and also closed the non-essential sectors. This policy was aimed at suppressing the rate of the pandemic. The efforts to carry out activities which adapting new habits are expected to have an impact on the rise of the economic sector in Indonesia, especially the tourism sector.

Nature tourism is one of the attractions that characterizes Indonesian tourism since Indonesia is known as a country that has natural beauty and cultural diversity. Liwa Botanical gardens is one of the natural attractions in West Lampung Regency which has the characteristics of plant and fruit vegetation in a cool climate. This natural tourist attraction still gets quite a lot of visitors compared to other areas, so it is necessary to increase the attractiveness of the Liwa Botanical gardens tourism object, which is a source of regional income.

To maximize the absorption of regional income through tourism, the enhancement of tourists' visit to a tourism area is needed. Nevertheless, getting an increasing number of visits or at least stable number is quite a complicated task. Therefore, visitors have to get a meaningful experience since the visiting experience itself is an attraction that makes tourists eager to visit a tourism object.

West Lampung Regency is one of the regencies in Lampung Province with the characteristics of hilly land contours and a very large area of vegetable and coffee plantations. The mountainous area of Bukit Barisan ridge in the brack rock area is a quarter volcanic area of several formations. West Lampung Regency is located at an altitude of 500-1000 m above sea level (MASL) which is traversed by the Semaka Hemisphere. In several areas of Suoh District, Suoh State Airport, West Lampung, there are volcanic and geothermal activities. There are various tourist attractions in West Lampung, such as Lake Ranau, Lake Suoh, Southern Bukit Barisan National Park, Mount Pesagi, Hujung Cultural Reserve and Liwa Botanical garden. Liwa Botanical gardens offers a natural panoramic atmosphere with a cool climate, Liwa Botanical garden also functions as a center for education and research on various types of rare plants. Liwa Botanical garden which is located in Pekon Kubu Perahu Village, Balik Bukit Sub-district, Liwa - West Lampung Regency, has a land area of 86 hectares with the theme of Indonesian Ornamental Plants. The number of tourists visiting West Lampung in 2020 was 182,408, it is considered as an increase compared to 2019 as many as 109,404 visitors with the highest number of tourists visiting the Liwa Botanical gardens as many as 45,026 visitors (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

Liwa Botanical garden is now a tourism destination that continues to be developed by the West Lampung Regency government. Liwa Botanical garden is one of 19 botanical gardens in Indonesia. As time goes by, people tend to need entertainment. The competition in tourism business is very tight. This condition requires tourism managers to develop the right strategy so that tourists get an interesting experience when visiting a tourist spot. Efforts to maximize the potential of tourism objects require strategies that are right on target and are able to provide a memorable visit experience and generate motivation to visit again. This can be achieved by promoting the elements that are the hallmarks of a tourist attraction. One of the marketing concepts that can be used to influence consumers emotionally so that costumers repeat their visit is through experiential marketing.

Experiential marketing is a business operated by the Liwa Botanical gardens manager by offering an experience that attracts consumers. Customers have the ability to distinguish each product and service from different tourism objects since customers directly feel and experience the products or services given. The research which is conducted by Yanto et al (2020) showed results which mention that experiential marketing produces a positive and significant effect on repurchase at the Pasa Rami restaurant in Surabaya. The results of Sheng-Hshung Tsaur, et al, (2007) research conducted at the Taipei Zoo, showed that experiential marketing gives a positive effect on emotions. Moreover, emotion also gives a positive effect on behavioral intentions through the mechanism of satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing Strategies

Every business entity has the goal of surviving and developing its business. This goal is achieved by maintaining or increasing the level of profit periodically. This can be achieved if the company maintains and increases its sales by continuously maintaining customer

retention and market share. The marketing strategy is designed using existing opportunities to win the competition in marketing so that the position of the company within the market can be maintained and at the same time can be improved.

Strategy is a wholly approach which has relation with the implementation of ideas, planning, and execution of a certain activity within a certain time period. In particular, strategy is the "placement" of the company's mission, setting organizational goals by considering external and internal strengths, formulating certain policies and strategies to achieve goals and ensuring their proper implementation, so that the organization's main goals and objectives will be achieved. Marketing strategy according to Kotler and Armstrong (2015: 3) is a process done from social and managerial sides in which individuals and groups get their needs and desire by creating, offering, and exchanging products which have value with others. Meanwhile, Assauri (2017:168) said that the marketing strategy is planned in a comprehensive, integrated and unified way in the marketing field which provides guidance on the activities which can be applied to achieve the company's marketing objectives. The results of the research by Prinka et al (2019), marketing strategies (promotion, prices, distribution channels, and products) have an effect on sales, customers and the company's financial performance. The results of research from Al Hadid and Al-Zu'bi (2014) show that marketing strategies affect the company's reputation.

Experiential Marketing

Experiential marketing is an done by marketers as an effort to package products and has the ability to offer experiences emotionally that can touch the consumer's feelings (Schmitt, 1999: 22). This can make customers able to distinguish products or services from a wide selection of products or services offered by marketers while consumers can feel and gain direct experience. According to Balqiah (2016: 9) Experiential marketing is a way in marketing which provides experiences to product buyers which is applies as efforts to attract buyers to use products/services, and even motivates consumers to make repeat purchases. According to Kartajaya, (2004:163) experiential marketing is a marketing concept that has objectives to produce loyal customers by touching them emotionally and providing them positive feeling towards products and services.

The basis of customer loyalty in this approach is the products and the service have to be able to enhance not only customer's sensations but also experiences. The results of research by Ratna Acintya Putri et al (2015) show the image of tourist facilities destinations and experiential marketing affect visitor satisfaction and visitor loyalty in partial way or simultaneous way. According to Andreani (2017: 19) experiential marketing is company's or marketer's effort to package products in order to make the products able to give emotional experiences which touch the user's hearts and feelings. According to Kustini (2017: 47) experiential marketing has four characteristics, namely; focusing on experience, examining consumption situations, consumers as not only rational but also emotional human beings and broad-minded tools and methods. Experiential marketing is not tied to only one

methodological ideology but is broad-minded. Kartajaya (2014: 56) says that in a more emotional and interactive world, products and services have to provide experience (product and service should be an experience), such as: physical and/or emotional experience, intellectual and/or spiritual experience.

Experiential marketing is a real experience for consumers towards a product or service to increase sales. Experiential marketing does not only provide information and opportunities for consumers to gather experience with the benefits which are gotten from the product or service itself, but also evoke not only emotions but also feelings which have impact on marketing, especially the sales of a company. According to Schmitt as cited in Kartajaya (2014: 33) there are indicators regarding experiential marketing, namely: Sensing (sense), relating to verbal and visual styles and symbols that are able to create a wholeness of an impression, Feel (Feeling) is a small attention shown to consumers. *Feel marketing* points to consumers' feelings and emotions, with the aim of creating affective experiences from positive moods associated with the brand, to strong emotions of joy and pride. The goal *Think or think marketing* is to influence customers to engage in creative thinking and create awareness through thinking processes that have an impact on the re-evaluation of the company, its products and services. Companies must quickly respond to the needs of consumer complaints. Companies are required to be able to think creatively. Act (Action) is designed to create a consumer experience in relation to the physical body, life style and interaction with other people. Relate (Relationship) or *Relate Marketing* is a way of forming or creating communication relationships with customers.

Methods

The population in this research were visitors of Liwa Botanical gardens who visited the place at an average of 1100 visitors per month. Researchers distributed questionnaires to visitors randomly with a total of 160. The valid questionnaires to be processed were 152 questionnaires with a response rate of 95 percent. The profiles of respondents in this study were 42 percent male and 58 percent female. Characteristics of respondents seen from the age of the respondent is the age of more than 18-27 years is 27.3 percent, the category of 28-37 years old is 26 percent, the category 38-47 years old is 30 percent and the category 48-57 years of age is 16.6 percent. .

The method to collect data in this study was by distributing questionnaire as the main instrument consisting of two parts; The first section collects information on the characteristics of the sample. The second part covers experiential marketing strategies through twenty-five questions adopted from previous research using a 5 Likert scale.

The validity and reliability in this study was carried out by distributing questionnaires to 30 people and the results were declared valid and reliable with a cronbach alpha value of 0.611 for experiential marketing and 0.913 for visitor interest.

Result and discussion

The design of this research is descriptive research conducted in the period February - June 2021 where at this phase the pandemic is occurring and data collection is limited due to the policy of reducing the number of visitors to the Liwa Botanical gardens. The results is presented from the results of the f test as follows;

Tabel 1
Anova

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	2196,029	5	439,206	284,364	,000 ^b
Residual	17,304	90	,192		
Total	2213,333	95			

a. Dependent Variable: Visiting Interest

b. Predictors: (Constant), Relate, Think, Feel, Act, Sense

Source :data processing result, 2021

Based on the output above, it can be seen that the significant value for the effect of Sense (X1) Feel (X2), Think (X3), Act (X4), Relate (X5) simultaneously or together on Employee Performance (Y) is $F_{count} 284,364 > 2.32 F_{table}$ and the value of Sig $0.000 < 0.05$ so it can be concluded that Sense (X1) Feel (X2), Think (X3), Act (X4), Relate (X5) simultaneously have an effect on Visiting Interest (Y) of visiting visitors coming back to Liwa Botanical garden. So this shows that the hypothesis Ha is accepted and Ho is rejected. These results are in accordance with the results of Yanto's research (2020), experiential marketing has a positive and significant effect on experiential value, repurchase intention, repurchase intention and repurchase intention through experiential value. These results also support the results of Lamongi's research, (2018) that sense experience, feel experience, think experience, act experience, and relate experience simultaneously have no significant effect on consumer repurchase interest of J.CO Donuts & Coffee.

The regression in this research is presented in the table below:

Tabel 2
Regression result

Variabel	Beta	t value	p value
sense	1,056	4,644	0.000
feel	0,382	6,134	0.000
think	-0,051	-1,039	0,302
act	0,674	2,953	0,004
relate	1,288	12,852	0.000

Source: data processing result 2021.

The effect of sense (X_1) on Visiting Interest which is seen from the results of the t-test, the sense t-count value was 4.644 with a Sig value of 0.000. Thus, it means that t-count $4,644 > t_{table} 1,986$ (attached t-table) with the level of Sig. $0.000 < 0.025$. This shows that the hypothesis Ha is accepted and Ho is rejected. So it can be interpreted that the sense variable (X_1) has an influence on the Visiting

Interest of Liwa Botanical gardens. Sense experience has an attraction with the senses, aims to create a sensory experience through sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. Sense marketing can be used to differentiate attractions, to motivate visitors, and to add value to products and services. With the creation of sense by the manager of the Liwa Botanical garden, it is hoped that it will affect the interest in returning to the Liwa Botanical garden.

The effect of feel (X_2) on Visiting Interest (Y) which is provided from results of the t-test, the t-count feel value is 6.134 with a Sig value of 0.000. Thus, it means that t-count 6,134 > t-table 1,986 with Significancy level of $0.000 < 0.025$. This shows that the hypothesis H_a is accepted and H_o is rejected. So that it can be interpreted that the feel variable has an influence on the Visitation Interest of Liwa Botanical gardens. Feel experience arises as a result of interactions that develop over time, which can be done through the feelings and emotions that are generated. Feel experience is a strategy and implementation to influence consumers through communication, product packaging, product identity and the environment. Feel is created through the experiences provided to consumers that can move the consumer's imagination and it is hoped that consumers can make a decision to visit the Liwa Botanical garden again.

The effect of think (X_3) on Visiting Interest based on the results of the t-test, the t-test value of think is -1.039 with a Sig value of 0.302. Thus, it means that t-count -1.039 < t-table 1.986 with a Significancy level. $0.302 > 0.025$. This shows that the hypothesis H_a is rejected and H_o is accepted. So that it can be interpreted that the think variable (X_3) has no influence on the Visitation Interest of Liwa Botanical gardens. Think experience or way of thinking aims to encourage consumers to be interested and think creatively so that consumers are expected to think about revisiting the Liwa Botanical garden.

The Effect of Act (X_4) on Interest in Visits to the Liwa Botanical gardens shown by the results of the t-test. The t-count value of Act was 2.953 with a Significancy value of 0.000. Thus, it means that t-count 2,953 > t-table 1,986 with the level of Sig. $0.004 < 0.025$. This shows that the hypothesis H_a is accepted and H_o is rejected. So it can be interpreted that the Act variable (X_2) has an influence on the Visitation Interest of Liwa Botanical gardens. Act experience is an effort made by the manager of the Liwa Botanical gardens to consumers by providing a real experience to consumers.

The effect of relate (X_5) on Visiting Interest (Y) as shown on the results from the t-test, the relate t value was 12,852 with a Sig value of 0.000. Thus, it means that the t-count is 12,852 > t-table 1,986 with the level of Sig. $0.000 < 0.025$. This shows that the hypothesis H_a is accepted and H_o is rejected. Therefore it is fair to interpret that relate variable (X_5) has an influence on the Interest of Visiting Visitors to the Liwa Botanical gardens. The relate experience aims to connect customers with the Liwa Botanical garden environment so as to create a unique atmosphere owned by Liwa Botanical garden.

The findings in this study, visitors get a memorable experience that is influenced by the natural atmosphere and facilities provided by the Liwa Botanical Garden, such as gardens that are attractively designed and in harmony with the natural contours of the Liwa Botanical Garden. In addition, in the relate variable, visitors expect to be able to get information online with social media that provides clear information about the operations of the Liwa botanical garden so that potential visitors can know the opening and closing hours during the pandemic phase. The results of this study support the results of research by Huriyati (2008) which shows that the experiential marketing of the Sampireun Village Resort & Spa is the most dominant factor, sense, the lowest variable is relate. Nurjanah's research

(2020) in which experiential marketing has a direct effect on customer loyalty is greater than the indirect effect through customer retention.

Conclusion

The indication showed by the results of this study is that sensing, feeling, acting, thinking and relating affect the interest in visiting Liwa Botanical garden. In its implementation, Liwa Botanical garden managers must pay more attention to the experiences gained by visitors so that visitors are interested in visiting again. Innovation and complete supporting facilities (entertainment factors) are important things to get an amazing experience for visitors of Liwa Botanical garden. The limitation which is faced nowadays is that the number of visitors is limited due to a limitation of gathering people in one place by the government during the pandemic.

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