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Low-Cost Digital Marketing Strategy: A Qualitative Study on Fazia Beauty Metro Lampung

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze low-budget digital marketing strategies implemented by Fazia Beauty in Metro City, Lampung. This research employed a qualitative approach using a qualitative survey method and a case study design. The informants consisted of 12 participants, including the owner, two employees, four long-term consumers, three new consumers, one prospective consumer/follower, and one university practitioner in marketing or entrepreneurship. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, open-ended surveys, Instagram and WhatsApp Business observations, documentation, and literature review. The data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, verification, and thematic analysis. The findings show that Fazia Beauty uses Instagram for promotion, education, testimonials, and awareness, while WhatsApp Business plays a stronger role in consultation, follow-up, ordering, and repeat purchases. Relevant low-budget strategies include organic content, product education, authentic testimonials, word of mouth, referrals, storytelling, customer communities, content calendars, basic bundling, and customer retention. These strategies have the potential to support consumer trust and sales opportunities, but their effectiveness needs to be tested through consistent implementation

INTRODUCTION

Advances in digital technology have transformed the way businesses introduce products, communicate with consumers, and build market trust. In the context of beauty products, digital marketing serves not only as a promotional medium but also as a tool for education, personalized communication, sharing testimonials, and building consumer trust. Beauty products are sensitive in nature because they relate to skin condition, safety, product suitability, and user experience. Therefore, digital marketing strategies for beauty products must prioritize information, credibility, and long-term relationships with consumers.

Digital marketing can be understood as the use of technology and digital media to support marketing activities, build relationships with customers, and create value for consumers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). Social media is a key channel because it enables two-way communication between brands and consumers. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) explain that social media provides a space for users to participate, share information, and interact. In beauty product marketing, social media can be used to showcase products, build awareness, educate consumers, and share customer experiences.

Instagram is a particularly relevant social media platform for beauty products due to its visual and interactive nature. On Instagram, business owners can make use of Reels, Stories, product photos, testimonials, and educational content. However, using Instagram does not always directly result in sales. For local brands with limited promotional budgets, Instagram more often serves as a platform for raising awareness, strengthening brand image, and acting as an initial entry point before consumers engage in further communication through more personal channels.

In addition to Instagram, WhatsApp Business also plays a crucial role in the digital marketing of small and medium-sized businesses. WhatsApp Business allows business owners to display product catalogs, answer customer questions, follow up with customers, and maintain post-purchase relationships.

From a relationship marketing perspective, the relationship between a brand and consumers is built not only through transactions but also through trust, commitment, communication, and ongoing service (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Thus, WhatsApp Business can be a relevant platform for beauty products, as consumers often require personalized explanations both before and after a purchase.

Fazia Beauty is a local beauty brand located on Jl. Alamsyah RPN, Metro City, Lampung. Its product offerings include day cream, night cream, facial wash, moisturizer, and serum. Fazia Beauty uses Instagram (account: @faziabeauty.id) and WhatsApp Business as its digital marketing channels. Strategies implemented have included product promotions, educational content, customer testimonials, communication via WhatsApp, and the use of local influencers at various times. However, Fazia Beauty still faces challenges in digital promotion, particularly budget constraints when it comes to hiring brand ambassadors, public figures, or running large-scale paid promotions.

These challenges highlight the importance of low-cost digital marketing strategies. A low-cost strategy does not mean promotions are carried out without planning; rather, it emphasizes optimizing the resources the brand already possesses, such as organic content, product education, authentic customer testimonials, word of mouth, referrals, customer databases, customer communities, storytelling, and customer retention. This strategy is relevant for local beauty brands because not all businesses have the financial capacity to follow the promotional models of major brands.

Previous research on digital marketing for beauty products has largely focused on social media marketing, influencer marketing, electronic word of mouth, brand trust, and purchase intention. Several studies have shown that social media, influencers, and consumer engagement can influence the intention to purchase local cosmetic products (Azizah, Gunawan, & Sinansari, 2021; Lim & Kesumahati, 2022). However, most of these studies employed a quantitative approach and focused on

testing relationships between variables. This study takes a different approach by using a qualitative methodology to understand low-cost digital marketing strategies employed by local beauty brands in the region.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze low-cost digital marketing strategies at Fazia Beauty in Metro City, Lampung. The research focuses on the digital strategies that have been implemented, promotional challenges with limited budgets, consumer perceptions of digital content and communication, and low-cost strategies that can be applied to support opportunities for increased sales.

METHODS

Using qualitative survey methods and case studies. A qualitative approach was used because this study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of Fazia Beauty's experiences, perceptions, challenges, and digital marketing strategies. Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that qualitative research is used to understand the meanings constructed by individuals or groups regarding a social or practical issue. In this study, the issue under examination is how Fazia Beauty manages low-cost digital marketing amid limited promotional budgets.

A qualitative survey method was used to explore the diversity of informants' perspectives on Fazia Beauty's digital marketing. Jansen (2010) explains that qualitative surveys are used to explore the diversity of experiences, perspectives, or behaviors within a specific group, rather than to produce statistical generalizations. In addition, this study also employed a case study approach because it focused on a single research subject, namely Fazia Beauty in Metro City, Lampung. Case studies are relevant for understanding contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts (Yin, 2018).

The research was conducted at Fazia Beauty, located on Jl. Alamsyah RPN, Metro City, Lampung. The research and observation period ran from January to May 2026. There were 12 research informants selected using purposive sampling. The informants consisted of one owner, two employees,

four long-time customers who had been using the products for at least one year, three new customers who had been using the products for less than one year, one prospective customer or follower who had not yet made a purchase, and one university practitioner in the field of marketing or entrepreneurship. The informant codes used were O, K1, K2, KL1–KL4, KB1–KB3, CK, and P. These codes were used to maintain the confidentiality of the informants' identities. The informants in this study were real individuals, not fictional characters.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, open-ended qualitative surveys, social media observation, documentation, and literature review. Interviews were conducted with the owner, employees, and practitioners. Open-ended surveys were administered to existing customers, new customers, and prospective customers. Observations were made on the Instagram account @faziabeauty.id and the use of Fazia Beauty's WhatsApp Business account. The documentation used included Instagram content, anonymized customer testimonials, the WhatsApp Business catalog, and promotional or bundling materials, if available.

Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions, verification, and thematic analysis. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020) explain that qualitative data analysis is conducted through data condensation or reduction, data presentation, and the drawing and verification of conclusions. Thematic analysis is used to identify thematic patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data validity is ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation is performed by comparing information from the business owner, employees, existing customers, new customers, prospective customers, and practitioners. Methodological triangulation is conducted by comparing data from interviews, open-ended surveys, observations, documentation, and literature reviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital Marketing Strategies Implemented by Fazia Beauty

Research findings indicate that Fazia Beauty has utilized Instagram and WhatsApp Business as its primary digital marketing channels. Instagram is used to promote products, share skincare information, showcase testimonials, and build rapport with customers and potential customers. The content used includes Reels, single images or product photos, Stories, and educational content on facial skincare and the proper use of skincare products. WhatsApp Business is used as a more personalized communication channel, primarily for orders, consultations, after-sales service, product reservations, and repeat purchases.

These findings indicate that Fazia Beauty's digital marketing is not only focused on product promotion but also on customer education and communication. From a digital marketing perspective, these activities align with the concept that digital channels can be used to create value, build customer relationships, and manage the consumer experience (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). For beauty products, the consumer experience begins with viewing content, reading testimonials, asking questions via WhatsApp, trying the product, and ultimately considering a repeat purchase.

The owner of Fazia Beauty stated that digital promotions will be aimed at educating women to choose products that are healthy and safe for the long term. This statement indicates that Fazia Beauty's marketing is not only focused on sales but also on building consumer awareness regarding product safety and quality. This is important because beauty products come into direct contact with the skin and often raise concerns about compatibility and long-term effects.

"Fazia will consistently run campaigns—whether on Instagram or WhatsApp—to show women how they can prioritize choosing products that are healthy and safe for the long term."

Instagram as a Platform for Awareness and Education

Instagram plays a vital role in introducing Fazia Beauty to consumers. According to the owner and employees, Instagram serves as a platform to promote products, share educational content, and attract potential customers. However, direct interaction with consumers occurs more frequently via WhatsApp than on Instagram. Thus, in the context of Fazia Beauty, Instagram is best understood as a platform for awareness and education, rather than as the primary channel for transactions.

These findings align with the concept of social media marketing, which positions social media as a space for communication and consumer engagement (Tuten & Solomon, 2021). Instagram allows Fazia Beauty to showcase product visuals, educational content, and customer testimonials. However, Instagram's effectiveness cannot be measured solely by the number of posts or visual views, but also by its ability to encourage consumers to seek further information.

"Instagram is quite effective at attracting attention, although Instagram followers have not yet significantly used or purchased Fazia Beauty products. The content is just as engaging as other Instagram content in the same product category. It's just that Fazia doesn't yet have a wide range of product categories."

This statement indicates that Instagram has played a role in building brand awareness but has not yet fully functioned as a driver of sales conversions. This is understandable because the process of purchasing beauty products often requires a higher level of confidence compared to regular consumer goods. Consumers don't just look at the content's visuals; they also consider other users' experiences, product safety, skin compatibility, and recommendations from people close to them.

Educational content is a relevant strategy for Fazia Beauty because it addresses consumer concerns. Content on facial skin care, how to use skincare products, the skin's recovery process, and safe product usage can help potential customers

better understand the products. From a digital content marketing perspective, content that provides informational value can build engagement, trust, and a positive perception of the brand (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

WhatsApp Business and Relationship Marketing

WhatsApp Business serves as a personal communication channel between Fazia Beauty and consumers. The primary feature used is the product catalog. Additionally, WhatsApp is used for pre-purchase consultations, product orders, after-sales service, follow-ups after product use, and repeat purchases. Common questions from consumers relate to skin conditions, skin reactions after using products, the duration of the skin recovery process, and complaints regarding product use.

From a relationship marketing perspective, communication via WhatsApp Business can strengthen the relationship between the brand and customers. Morgan and Hunt (1994) explain that trust and commitment are key elements in marketing relationships. At Fazia Beauty, these relationships are built through personal, responsive, and ongoing communication.

“WhatsApp is typically used by existing customers for orders and repeat purchases, or to reserve products out of concern that they might run out.”

This statement indicates that WhatsApp Business has the potential to support customer retention. Although this study did not statistically measure the relationship between WhatsApp and increased sales, the data suggests that WhatsApp plays a role in maintaining communication with existing customers and fostering opportunities for repeat purchases. Thus, WhatsApp Business can serve as a relevant, low-cost strategy for Fazia Beauty—especially when managed through a customer database, product catalog, and ethical follow-up practices.

Post-purchase follow-ups are also a crucial part of beauty product marketing strategies. Fazia Beauty checks in on how customers are using the products after some time has passed. This activity serves not

only to gather testimonials but also to demonstrate care for consumers. In the context of relationship marketing, post-purchase service can enhance the customer experience and foster loyalty.

Testimonials, Word of Mouth, and Consumer Trust

Customer testimonials are one form of electronic word of mouth used by Fazia Beauty. Testimonials are collected via WhatsApp after customers have used the products. Fazia Beauty requests permission from customers before using their testimonials. Customers’ identities and their eyes are blurred to protect their privacy and ensure the focus of the testimonials remains on the condition of their facial skin.

Electronic word of mouth can influence consumer perceptions because it stems from the experiences of other users (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). In the beauty industry, testimonials play a crucial role because potential customers often seek evidence of others’ experiences before deciding to make a purchase. However, this study shows that digital testimonials are not the only factor influencing consumer confidence. Word of mouth from close contacts—such as friends, family, or coworkers—is actually more powerful in driving the decision to try a product.

“The reason I decided to try and use Fazia products was because I saw a coworker whose skin used to look unhealthy but now looks healthy—not just glowing.”

These findings show that real-life experiences shared by people close to us are more convincing than typical digital promotions. As a result, word-of-mouth and customer referral strategies are highly relevant for Fazia Beauty. Trust is built not only through Instagram content but also through social proof stemming from consumers’ personal relationships.

“Alhamdulillah, Fazia’s products are excellent, and the longer I use them, the healthier and more radiant my skin feels. However, using

these products does require patience because it takes time for the skin to repair damaged skin cells.”

This statement suggests that consumer trust develops gradually through the experience of using a product. In brand trust theory, trust is related to consumers’ belief that a brand can meet their expectations and provide reliable value (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2005). At Fazia Beauty, informants also linked the trust factor to the perception that the products have BPOM approval and are safe for long-term use.

However, testimonials still need to be managed ethically. Fazia Beauty must not present testimonials as a guarantee of the same results for all consumers. Results from using beauty products can vary due to skin condition, history of previous product use, consistency of use, and other individual factors. Therefore, testimonials should be positioned as consumer experiences, not absolute claims.

Challenges of Low-Cost Digital Marketing

Fazia Beauty’s main challenge in digital marketing relates to budget constraints that limit its ability to run large-scale campaigns, such as those involving brand ambassadors or well-known public figures. Additionally, Fazia Beauty faces challenges related to limited human resources, a lack of fresh content ideas, and the need to manage its Instagram and WhatsApp Business accounts more effectively.

“Generally, the beauty industry requires high promotional costs. As a result, many beauty products on the market emerge and go viral because they’re backed by high-cost promoters. However, this doesn’t last long if it isn’t supported by good, high-quality products.”

This statement reflects an awareness that going viral does not always equate to brand sustainability. Fazia Beauty has chosen not to rely on discounts or price cuts because it wants to maintain its positioning as a premium-quality product at an affordable price. This strategy is crucial because discount-based promotions risk diminishing the perceived value of

the product if they do not align with the brand’s positioning.

Fazia Beauty has also worked with three local influencers at different times. However, according to research data, the results have not significantly boosted sales. The use of local influencers has been more effective in raising awareness among certain segments of the public—particularly women—about Fazia Beauty. These findings suggest that local micro-influencers can be a viable alternative, but they must be selected carefully. The number of followers is not a sufficient primary indicator; audience fit, credibility, communication style, and proximity to the target market are more important factors to consider.

Barriers to Purchase Among Potential Consumers

Potential consumers still have reservations before purchasing Fazia Beauty products. These reservations stem from past negative experiences with beauty products, comparisons with other trending brands, and the lack of endorsements from major public figures or cosmetic doctors.

“It takes a fair amount of courage to decide to try a new product, especially after having used beauty products from various brands with unsatisfactory results. However, hearing testimonials from close friends who have already used the product significantly boosts confidence and encourages people to give Fazia a try.”

This statement reinforces the finding that word-of-mouth from close acquaintances is a key factor in building trust among potential customers. Potential customers need not only engaging content but also information that can reduce perceived risk. In the context of consumer behavior, decisions to purchase beauty products often involve information-seeking

and risk assessment. Therefore, Fazia Beauty needs to strengthen its educational content, authentic testimonials, product safety explanations, and consultative communication.

Formulation of a Low-Cost Digital Marketing Strategy

Based on the results and discussion, a low-cost digital marketing strategy tailored for Fazia Beauty encompasses several aspects. First, optimizing organic Instagram content. Instagram content should focus not only on product promotion but also on education, storytelling, testimonials, and interactive content. A weekly content calendar can be used to ensure consistency and reduce reliance on spontaneous ideas.

Second, educational content on beauty products needs to be strengthened. Content can cover how to care for facial skin, how to use skincare products, the skin recovery process, realistic expectations for results, and the importance of choosing safe products. This strategy is relevant because many consumers ask about their skin condition, how their skin responds to products, and how long the skin recovery process takes.

Third, authentic customer testimonials and word-of-mouth need to be managed more systematically. Digital testimonials can be used to strengthen social proof, while word-of-mouth from existing customers can be channeled through a simple referral program. Referrals are better suited to Fazia Beauty's situation because recommendations from people close to the customer are proven to be more convincing to potential customers than promotions from unknown sources.

Fourth, WhatsApp Business needs to be optimized as a channel for customer follow-up and retention. Fazia Beauty can use its customer database to segment potential customers, new customers, existing customers, and customers likely to place repeat orders. However, follow-ups must be conducted ethically to avoid disturbing customers.

Fifth, local brand storytelling can serve as a differentiation strategy. Fazia Beauty can highlight the brand's journey, the value of its healthy and safe products, customer experiences, and its connection

with local consumers. Storytelling doesn't have to be direct promotion; instead, it can take the form of narratives that build emotional connection and trust.

Sixth, a customer community can serve as a long-term alternative. The community can be used for light educational content, product usage tips, skincare reminders, and sharing experiences. However, the community must be managed carefully so it does not turn into an overly aggressive promotional space.

Seventh, basic bundling packages can be implemented without undermining price positioning. Since Fazia Beauty does not want to use a discount strategy, bundling can be positioned as a basic skincare package—for example, day cream, night cream, and facial wash. This bundling can help new customers understand basic product combinations without positioning the brand as a discount brand.

These strategies cannot be guaranteed to increase sales before being tested through implementation. However, they have the potential to boost trust, customer engagement, repeat purchases, and sales opportunities. Their effectiveness can be measured through indicators such as the number of inquiries via WhatsApp, increased Instagram engagement, the number of customer testimonials, the number of repeat customers, and the number of new customers acquired through referrals.

Research Contribution

This study contributes to the field of digital marketing research on local beauty brands. Theoretically, this study demonstrates that social media marketing, relationship marketing, electronic word-of-mouth, and brand trust can be used in an integrated manner to understand low-cost digital marketing strategies. Instagram plays a role in raising awareness and providing education, WhatsApp Business plays a role in personal communication and customer retention, while testimonials and word-of-mouth play a role in building trust.

Practically, this study offers insights for Fazia Beauty and other local beauty brands, showing that limited promotional budgets do not always pose an insurmountable obstacle. Local brands can optimize

their available resources through organic content, education, personalized service, authentic testimonials, loyal customers, referrals, storytelling, and customer retention. These strategies are more realistic than attempting to replicate the high-cost promotional models of major brands.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Fazia Beauty's digital marketing strategy relies on Instagram and WhatsApp Business. Instagram is used for promotion, education, testimonials, and brand awareness, while WhatsApp Business plays a greater role in consultations, follow-ups, orders, and repeat purchases. These two channels complement each other in fostering communication between Fazia Beauty and its customers.

Fazia Beauty's main challenge is a limited budget for large-scale promotions, such as brand ambassadors, public figures, or intensive paid promotions. Additionally, Fazia Beauty faces limitations in human resources, a lack of fresh content ideas, and the need for more effective management of its Instagram and WhatsApp accounts.

Consumer perceptions indicate that trust in Fazia Beauty is built through product usage experience, product safety, BPOM status (according to informants), WhatsApp customer service, customer testimonials, and recommendations from close contacts. Digital testimonials help build trust, but word-of-mouth from friends, family, or coworkers has a stronger influence in encouraging potential customers to try the products.

Low-cost digital marketing strategies that Fazia Beauty can implement include optimizing organic Instagram content, educational content, authentic customer testimonials, word of mouth, customer referrals, WhatsApp Business for follow-ups and repeat orders, local brand storytelling, customer communities, a weekly content calendar, basic product bundles, and retention of existing customers. These strategies have the potential to build consumer trust and drive sales opportunities, but their

effectiveness still needs to be tested through consistent implementation.

This study has limitations because it focuses on only one local beauty brand and uses a qualitative approach. Future research could involve more local beauty brands or use a mixed-methods approach by incorporating quantitative data, such as Instagram engagement, the number of WhatsApp clicks, the number of repeat orders, or changes in sales before and after the strategies are implemented.

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