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**DIGITAL MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AT  
GRADIN AGENCY IN BUILDING BRAND IMAGE**

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**Abstract:**

The digital marketing communication strategy plays an important role in the era of rapid technological development. Companies must adapt to maintain consumer interest and drive sales. Many companies compete by promoting their products and brands to ensure consumer recognition. To achieve this, companies employ various digital tools to build brand recognition. This study aims to understand how digital marketing communication strategies shape brand image at Gradin agency. The research employs theories of communication strategy, marketing communication, digital marketing, and brand image. This quasi-qualitative research systematically describes the research object using communication strategy, digital marketing, and brand image theories. The method includes interviews and documentation to enhance data analysis related to organizational communication at Gradin agency. Researchers developed research instruments, including interview guidelines and questions based on research indicators. The result is an innovative digital marketing communication strategy, optimizing website features, creating interactive content on Instagram and TikTok, communicating with consumers through email marketing, and optimizing content and keywords for SEO. These strategies help Gradin create a positive brand image.

**Keywords:** Communication Strategy, Digital Marketing, Brand Image.

**INTRODUCTION**

The rapid development of communication technology in this era, marked by the growth of the internet, has had a significant impact on marketing communication. The growth of the internet can also have a significant impact on companies, offering a new atmosphere for more effective and efficient marketing. In Indonesia, marketing communication has developed significantly with the advancement of internet usage. According to APJII (2023), data shows that there were 215.626 million internet users in Indonesia during the period 2022-2023. It has led to an internet penetration rate of 78.19% in Indonesia. The development of the internet, particularly in the digital field, has greatly influenced companies in changing their promotional strategies to digital.

The advancement of digital-based information technology is increasingly strengthening the position of businesses in facing competition in the era of Industry 4.0 (Pradiani, 2017). Even traditional companies are now starting to switch to digital marketing to maintain competitiveness with more modern companies (Mohansyah & Parani, 2018). It requires companies to adapt and utilize digital platforms to get opportunities that can be utilized by business owners to expand the reach of their products by maximizing the quality of the services they provide using digital marketing. As quoted from Saputra et al. (2020), digital marketing is a medium that is used and favored by many audiences as a supporting tool in daily life.

Innovation in business is an effective factor in bringing success to companies with a unique innovative approach in creating value and competitiveness (Ikeda & Marshall, 2016). Companies must take advantage of this opportunity to expand the reach of their products and interact more



directly with consumers. Therefore, companies that are able to use digital communication channels appropriately can obtain and disseminate information more quickly (Anggraeni et al., 2019). By utilizing platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook, companies can run more dynamic and interactive digital marketing campaigns.

The use of digital marketing is not just a sales tool, but also a means to build a strong brand image. Service through digital media has been proven to increase customer trust, which ultimately impacts the company's reputation (Boer & Hendrastuti, 2018). Therefore, in efforts to build brand image and customer trust, companies need to innovate and adapt to technological developments and consumer preferences continuously.

Gradin is a prime example of a company that demonstrates how digital marketing can be utilized to construct brand image for its clients, such as Tineco and Ecovacs. With a strategic approach to content and branding, Gradin is adept at crafting a strong and relevant image for its clients. Therefore, this research aims to delve into the digital marketing communication strategies employed by Gradin in building brand image.

In the explanation above, this research aims to delve deeper into the digital marketing communication strategies applied by Gradin. Through a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, it is hoped that valuable contributions can be made to the development of the theory and practice of digital marketing in Indonesia, and serve as a reference for other companies that want to leverage the full potential of digital marketing in building a strong brand image. Based on the background above, the researcher is interested in researching the thesis entitled "Digital Marketing Communication Strategy at Gradin Agency in Building Brand Image".

## METHODS

This research uses a quasi-qualitative research method, which is a combination of a qualitative approach still influenced by positivism, especially in hypothesis formulation. In quantitative research, hypotheses are tested based on theory, while in quasi-qualitative research, hypotheses are used during data collection in the field. (Bungin, 2020). This method involves steps such as formulating problems, investigating literature, identifying knowledge gaps, forming hypotheses, determining data sources, and designing data collection strategies. The reason for using this method is to answer research questions that require direct data from the owners and employees of Gradin Agency, using interviews and documentation as an in-depth analysis approach.

The steps in this research include the interview and documentation process. Interviews are conducted using a semi-structured interview type, where respondents are given the freedom to express their opinions freely in response to questions from the interviewer (Sidiq & Choirul, 2019). There are three informants who are interviewees, namely the Founder and Digital Marketing Communication of Gradin, a Gradin consumer, and an expert in Digital Marketing Communication. The next step is documentation, which involves collecting information from various sources such as archives, documents, and books that support the research. Next is the data analysis process. According to Sugiyono (2019), this process involves breaking down data into smaller units, as well as organizing data into patterns to determine what needs to be studied in depth. This process involves data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This research also involves reviewing data validity through triangulation, which compares interview results from various sources to ensure the reliability of the information collected. According to Creswell (2016), reliability in qualitative research reflects the consistency of the approach applied by the researcher to different projects. This research process will involve reliability through an audit by the supervisor, scheduled to ensure the reliability of this research.



## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the interview results, it was revealed that Gradin implements a three-stage communication strategy: planning, implementation, and evaluation. Planning begins with evaluating the company's situation and setting appropriate strategies to create consumer appeal for Gradin. Focusing on customer service as a key element aims to provide a unique experience for customers, build loyalty, and dedication to the Gradin brand. The Implementation stage is carried out through coordination between divisions within the company, where the Marketing Division collaborates with the Social-Media Team and the Operational Team to implement previously planned marketing ideas. Finally, the Evaluation stage is an important aspect as it allows the company to assess the effectiveness of various communication strategies. By regularly reviewing and evaluating achievements over a month, Gradin can identify which strategies need to be strengthened and improved and direct resources towards the most efficient communication strategies to achieve business goals and strengthen their brand image because user-centered marketing strategies will also have a positive impact on the company (Indrayani & Sunarto, 2019). The use of digital marketing as an effective tool in facilitating Gradin's marketing strategy shows the importance of presenting interesting and informative content to attract public attention, but its management needs to be improved to achieve the company's goals. Digital marketing has become an effective tool in facilitating Gradin's marketing strategy, showing the importance of presenting interesting and informative content to attract public attention. However, its management needs to be improved to achieve the company's goals.

Digital marketing is a means of marketing products or services using digital media online to reach a wider audience (Purwana dkk, 2017). Digital marketing has become an effective tool in facilitating marketing strategies due to its ability to reach all market segments without geographical limitations, as highlighted by Purwana, Rahmi & Aditya (2017). However, to achieve optimal results, it is important for companies to ensure that the content presented through digital marketing is attractive and informative to the public, as stated by Selvy Tri. Information obtained from interviews with Gradin shows expectations for improved digital marketing management to attract the attention of the general public. However, challenges arise because updates in management still occur less frequently, something that needs to be considered so that Gradin's digital marketing strategy can effectively achieve company goals. According to Hasan (2022), there are several tools used in implementing digital marketing activities to increase product sales, including:

**Website.** Gradin's main goal in developing a website is to facilitate consumers in conducting transactions independently and provide convenience for the company in customer data collection. Appel et al. (2020) stated that the main role of a website is to activate the company's main services so that consumers can access them. In addition, the website also serves to create the company's presence on various integrated digital channels. According to Appel et al. (2020), the main requirement for a good website is its ability to deliver the information needed by consumers easily. It will help the company achieve success in the online world. By creating a website based on all the criteria, Gradin will provide an informative marketing alternative for users, and if all the criteria of the website can be met, the website will help the company to represent the company's image (eMarketing Institute, 2018). Gradin's efforts to facilitate access to information are carried out through several features on the website, starting from the available portfolio that can provide additional information about the desired services, thus helping the company to achieve success in the online world.

**Instagram Social Media.** Martinus and Chaniago (2017) stated that Instagram is one of the social media platforms that allows companies to tell stories and enhance brand reputation. Gradin applies an innovative marketing approach by using the Instagram social media platform as a step to increase its presence and strengthen its connection with consumers. In its implementation, Gradin takes careful steps by arranging content according to the brand book, an internal brand identity guide that has been compiled. In addition, Instagram is an ideal platform for Gradin to showcase their visual branding portfolio. By uploading content regularly and choosing the right time and moment, Gradin successfully attracts the attention of potential consumers. They also utilize various Instagram features, such as Instagram Stories, IGTV, and other interactive features, as creative means to create interesting content and interact directly with the audience. With this approach, Gradin successfully builds a strong online presence and provides an interactive platform for consumers to engage with their brand actively.

**TikTok Social Media.** The Instagram social media platform, which can be used by everyone to share photos and videos through devices, is one of the most potent promotional tools (Indika & Jovita, 2017). Gradin takes an innovative step by utilizing the TikTok social media platform as an effort to increase its presence and build a closer relationship with consumers. One of the strategies used by Gradin is to display the work environment and collaboration between employees through TikTok content. By showing the excitement of teamwork at Gradin, the company not only shows its professionalism but also creates a more familiar and close image with its audience. In addition to exploring content that showcases teamwork, Gradin also optimizes the right time and moment to upload content on TikTok. By understanding the TikTok audience and utilizing its creative features, Gradin can create interesting content. It not only helps increase brand exposure but also creates opportunities to interact directly with consumers. By combining creative marketing strategies with optimal use of TikTok features, Gradin successfully builds a strong presence on the platform and establishes a positive relationship with its consumers.

**Email Marketing.** Gradin uses email marketing strategy as one of the main means to facilitate transactions and interactions between consumers and the company. By utilizing the features available in email marketing, Gradin can proactively inform customers about the latest products, special offers, and others. In this way, email is not only a promotional tool but also a means to increase customer awareness of the various services and products offered by Gradin. In addition, Gradin utilizes email marketing to improve customer service by providing the latest and most relevant information to customers. With the features available in email, customers can participate in direct communication with Gradin, share experiences, and provide valuable feedback. By collecting feedback through email, Gradin can gain direct insights from customers, understand their needs, and respond quickly to improve the quality of services and products. Overall, email marketing becomes a multifunctional tool for Gradin in building a strong relationship with customers and improving the efficiency of the transaction process.

**SEO Activation.** According to Khraim (2015), SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is a technique to increase organic traffic to the company's website through search engines. A strong online presence is important in the digital era to make it easier for potential visitors to find the company's website. SEO language is the key to success in facing tough competition in the digital world, with SEO strategies, competitiveness, experience, and techniques becoming important factors. Companies must utilize SEO to increase organic website traffic. Gradin, in its digital marketing, adopts an SEO strategy with a focus on increasing visibility and targeting specific locations. With content optimization and the use of relevant keywords, Gradin ensures that its website appears in relevant search results for users, becoming one of the key strategies in achieving



maximum exposure and attracting potential consumers. Gradin's SEO evaluation strategy focuses on keyword acquisition, with the addition of new keywords every month and the creation of landing pages or specific articles for each keyword. With this approach, Gradin hopes to expand its organic keyword coverage and have a broader reach in their SEO efforts.

With the above digital marketing instruments, it can create a brand image component that benefits the company with a positive image. Through various digital platforms, Gradin successfully delivers messages that build and strengthen its brand identity. Active interaction on social media, relevant content, and targeted online campaigns help Gradin to stay connected with its audience, create positive relationships, and shape a strong brand image. By effectively utilizing its online presence, Gradin can not only increase its brand visibility but also create a positive perception in the minds of consumers, solidifying its position as the top choice in the minds of digitally connected consumers. According to Tjiptono (2015), the image is divided into three categories:

**Maker Image.** The maker image or corporate image reflects the perceptions and associations formed in the minds of consumers towards a company, product, or service. Gradin has successfully formed a positive image in the minds of its consumers through active presence on social media. Consumers describe Gradin as a company fully committed to helping them achieve their goals. By highlighting the tagline "one stop solution," Gradin conveys the message that they are not only a provider of products or services but also a partner ready to provide comprehensive solutions. Through digital marketing strategies, Gradin has successfully built an image that convinces consumers that they can rely on it as a business partners. Gradin's online activities are not only focused on product promotion but also highlight their commitment to customer satisfaction and best service. Thus, the maker image creates a positive relationship between Gradin and its consumers, making Gradin the top choice as a comprehensive solution for business and individual needs.

**User Image.** Gradin uses the concept of user image to build positive associations in the minds of consumers towards its products, with a focus on growth and knowledge. With the message "grow with knowledge," Gradin seeks to create the perception that users of its products are not only consumers but also individuals who continue to grow with the company. With the philosophy that company and consumer growth are interrelated, Gradin emphasizes the idea of "grow" to invite its consumers to experience development and success together. It strengthens the bond between the brand and individuals, creating a deeper and more sustainable relationship where Gradin's product users feel that they are on a growth journey with the company.

**Product Image.** In its product image, Gradin highlights the concept of "work of excellence," which reflects the company's dedication to delivering outstanding results. It means that Gradin's products not only meet high-quality standards but also provide a superior user experience. Thus, Gradin has successfully built a positive product image in the minds of consumers, portraying that every product produced by Gradin is a good choice because of its excellent quality and ability to meet consumer needs effectively.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the interview results, Gradin implements a three-stage communication strategy: planning, implementation, and evaluation. Planning involves evaluating the company's situation and setting appropriate strategies to create consumer appeal for Gradin. Focusing on customer service as a key element aims to provide a unique experience for customers, build loyalty, and dedication to the Gradin brand. The Implementation stage is carried out through coordination between divisions within the company, where the Marketing Division collaborates with the Social Media Team and the Operational Team to implement previously planned marketing ideas. Finally,



the Evaluation stage is an important aspect as it allows the company to assess the effectiveness of various communication strategies. By regularly reviewing and evaluating achievements over a month, Gradin can identify which strategies need to be strengthened and improved and direct resources towards the most efficient communication strategies to achieve business goals and strengthen their brand image.

Digital marketing has become an effective tool in facilitating Gradin's marketing strategy, demonstrating the importance of presenting engaging and informative content to attract public attention. However, its management needs to be improved to achieve the company's goals. There are several strategies used by Gradin in implementing digital marketing activities, namely optimizing website features, creating interactive content on Instagram and TikTok, establishing communication with consumers through email marketing, and optimizing content and the use of relevant keywords for SEO. These strategies help Gradin create a brand image that benefits the company with a positive image. Through various digital platforms, Gradin has successfully conveyed messages that build and strengthen its brand identity. Active social media interactions, relevant content, and targeted online campaigns help Gradin stay connected with its audience, create positive relationships, and shape a strong brand image. By effectively utilizing its online presence, Gradin can not only increase its brand visibility but also create a positive perception in the minds of consumers, strengthening its position as the top choice in the minds of digitally connected consumers.

Brand image is divided into three categories: Maker Image, User Image, and Product Image. The Maker Image reflects the perceptions and associations formed in the minds of consumers towards a company, product, or service. Gradin has successfully formed a positive image in the minds of its consumers through active presence on social media. Consumers describe Gradin as a company fully committed to helping them achieve their goals. The User Image focuses on building positive associations in the minds of consumers towards its products, with a focus on growth and knowledge. Gradin seeks to create the perception that users of its products are not only consumers but also individuals who continue to grow with the company. The Product Image highlights the concept of "work of excellence," which reflects the company's dedication to delivering outstanding results. Gradin has successfully built a positive product image in the minds of consumers, portraying that every product produced by Gradin is a good choice because of its excellent quality and ability to meet consumer needs effectively.

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