

Optimizing Customer Relationship Management Communication in Increasing Brand Awareness and Loyalty of Prestige Fixed and Mobile Customers at PT Telkomsel Medan

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the optimization of *Customer Relationship Management* (CRM) communication in increasing *brand awareness* and customer loyalty at PT Telkomsel Medan and analyze its obstacles. The theory used in this study is the *Human Relations Theory*. The informants in this investigation are employees of PT Telkomsel Medan and prestige customers of PT Telkomsel Medan. The research method used is qualitative with data collection techniques through interviews and documentation. Data analysis is carried out through reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing and to ensure the validity of the data using source triangulation. The results of the study show that PT Telkomsel Medan optimizes CRM communication, among others, taking advantage of every national and international momentum such as the Aquabike Event to introduce Telkomsel products, segment customers, provide *rewards* and *loyalty* to customers, provide MyTelkomsel applications that are useful to more easily reach customers, and collect customer data through the application *Digital Smart Care* (DSC) as well as employee performance evaluations every month. This approach not only increases *brand awareness* but also creates a harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship between the company and customers. PT Telkomsel Medan also experienced obstacles in the implementation of CRM activities, including in terms of technology, namely limited access to *the Digital Smart Care* (DSC) application and human resources that arose due to miscommunication between PT Telkomsel Medan employees and customers.

Keywords: PT Telkomsel Medan, Customer Relationship Management, Brand Awareness, Customer Loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

PT Telkomsel, as one of the largest telecommunication service providers in Indonesia, has long implemented various innovations in improving customer relationships through the Telkomsel Prestige program. This program is intended for the premium customer segment who need a higher quality of service, both for personal and business needs. Optimizing *Customer Relationship Management* (CRM) communication is the main key to increasing *brand awareness* and customer loyalty, especially in the highly competitive telecommunication service segment.

PT Telekomunikasi Selular or commonly abbreviated as Telkomsel is a subsidiary of Telkom Indonesia engaged in telecommunications for individual consumers. One of Telkomsel's latest efforts is the launch of *Telkomsel One's* convergence service and the development of *the latest version of the MyTelkomsel* application that integrates AI technology to improve the user experience. In addition to maximizing customer service by utilizing technological advancements, Telkomsel also synergizes to strengthen cooperation with all divisions to increase customer satisfaction.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is an effort to maintain customer loyalty and maintain good relationships between companies and existing customers. Through the use of CRM, companies will know what their customers need so that an emotional bond will be

created that is able to create close and open business relationships and two-way or reciprocal communication between them, thus customer loyalty can be maintained and not easily transferred to other products and brands, especially the products and brands of competing companies (Pambudi in Muku, 2023).

The positive value provided by customers is very important in a business competition. This indicates that the customer in question is satisfied with what they expect from the company to be achieved. Through the best service to customers, the company shows its commitment to providing high quality service and satisfactory service, which will encourage customer loyalty to the company (Prasetyo, 2020).

Customer loyalty is a very important thing and must be considered by the company, because if the customer is loyal to the company, the customer will help promote the company's products to the closest people, which can make the company's products have a priority in the hearts of loyal customers and it is less likely for customers to turn to the other side, especially turning to the products of competitor companies.

This research is important considering that increasing *brand awareness* is usually positively related to customer loyalty. Brands that are widely known and reputable tend to attract more loyal customers. However, to maximize customer loyalty, companies must ensure that they also provide a positive customer experience and high-quality products or services. Therefore, the researcher is interested in researching more about optimizing *customer relationship management* communication in increasing *brand awareness* and loyalty of prestige fixed and mobile customers at PT Telkomsel Medan.

THEORETICAL DESCRIPTION

A. Communication Optimization

Communication optimization is a design that describes what must be done in relation to communication in achieving the goal, in what way, and to whom the communication is addressed, with the equipment and in the period of time for how long it can be achieved and how to evaluate the results obtained from the program (Robin Mehall in Cangara, 2013).

Communication optimization is simply the same as doing communication planning which is always associated with how to create effective communication. Optimization of communication in a broader scope is very necessary to develop strategies so that large-scale programs can be successful and impactful. Communication optimization is very crucial in the success of a program, namely all staff or employees and stakeholders must be able to understand the goals to be achieved.

B. Customer Relationship Management

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is defined as the integration of a coordinated sales, marketing, and service strategy. CRM is a key business strategy that integrates internal processes and functions with external networks to create and realize value for target consumers in a profitable manner (Wicaksono, 2021).

CRM can also be interpreted as a comprehensive business strategy in a company that allows the company to effectively manage relationships with customers. The company is able to understand every step needed to serve customers well, so that customers feel satisfied through the CRM system. This customer satisfaction can encourage a sustainable increase in business revenue (Sinaga, 2023).

According to experts Lovelock, Jochen and Jacky (in Zahra, 2022), at least 5 (five) main processes are needed to encourage companies to implement CRM strategies, namely:

1. Strategic Development

The initial stage starts by focusing on several things such as customer segmentation, service enhancement and program rewards for customers.

2. Value Creation

The company offers loyalty programs that provide benefits to customers, such as improving excellent service, creating comfortable conditions for customers and others.

3. Multi-channel integration

The company as a forum that provides various forms of services, such as providing a website, opening affiliates to make it easier to reach customers.

4. Information Management

The company collects, stores, and analyzes customer data as a whole. This stage can help companies improve their existing CRM strategy if there are still shortcomings of what customers need.

5. Performance Evaluation

This phase is part of the company's process of evaluating the strategic efforts of the CRM implemented.

C. Brand Awareness

Durianto (in Nathania, 2020), *Brand Awareness* is the process by which a potential buyer who intends to make a purchase can recognize and recall a particular brand as part of a product category. *Brand awareness* It arises from a sense of familiarity with the brand. This familiar taste gives consumers confidence when using the product. This trust reduces the feeling of risk that consumers face, which ultimately encourages consumers to consider and choose the brand.

Achieving brand awareness is an initial challenge for new brands, while maintaining a high level of brand awareness is an ongoing task for established brands. Marketing communication can affect brand awareness if all elements in the concept of the marketing mix are optimally applied (Tulas, in Noti 2021).

D. Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is the loyalty to continue to purchase or use a preferred product or service repeatedly in the future, unaffected by existing situational conditions or marketing efforts (Nuraeni, 2020).

Based on the above statement, it can be concluded that customer loyalty is a condition in which customers feel satisfied with the product or brand they use, so they are more likely to buy the same product over and over again. Customer loyalty is also a benchmark for a company's success. The greater the customer loyalty, the greater the value obtained by a company.

E. Fixed and Mobile

Product *fixed broadband* (home internet) owned by Telkomsel, which is named Indonesia Digital Home or Indihome, is one of the home internet service products where this product is in the form of a communication and data service package including fast internet (Fiber Internet), landline internet (Fixed Phone), and interactive television service (UseeTV).

Mobile broadband services or data services for smartphone users are wireless internet access through portable modems, mobile phones, USB wireless modems, tablets or other mobile devices. Mobile broadband is an internet technology using a data communication network that allows the transmission and reception of data at high speed and in large quantities of video data, images, text and other data.

F. Organizational Communication

Organizational communication is a series of communication processes that take place within an organization, involving all its members, with the aim of achieving the vision and mission of the organization (Kayana, 2023).

G. Theory of Human Relations

Theory of Human Relations (*Human Relations Theory*) was first coined by Elton Mayo and his assistant Fritz Roethlisberger in the 1930s. Human-to-human relationship theory is a theory that focuses on how individuals interact, build, and maintain relationships with others in a social context. This theory emphasizes the importance of effective communication in the

formation and maintenance of relationships between individuals. This theory is often used in the study of communication, social psychology, and relationship management to understand interpersonal dynamics and ways to improve the quality of human relationships, whether in a personal, organizational, or business context.

The theory of human relations provides a very relevant basis for understanding how telecommunications companies such as Telkomsel can optimize communication *Customer Relationship Management* (CRM). Through the application of the principles of interpersonal communication, trust, emotional attachment, and relationship nurturing, Telkomsel can create a deeper customer experience and build long-term loyalty.

METHOD

This type of research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Qualitative research is a research procedure that is carried out based on perceptions of a phenomenon with its data method that produces a descriptive analysis in the form of sentences from the object of research (Sahir, 2021).

Qualitative research is a type of research that focuses on an in-depth understanding of social, cultural, and behavioral phenomena through the collection and analysis of data that are descriptive, narrative, and interpretive in nature (Faustyna, 2023).

The subject in this study is Customer Relationship Management (CRM) at PT Telkomsel Medan. Meanwhile, the object of this study is the optimization of *customer relationship management* communication in increasing *brand awareness* and customer loyalty as well as *prestige fixed* and *mobile* customers at PT Telkomsel Medan which are the target of increasing *brand awareness* and customer loyalty.

The data collection techniques in this study are by means of interviews, observations and documentation.

In general, there are two data sources used, namely primary and secondary data. The data is as follows:

1. Primary Data

Primary data is information obtained directly from the first source, without involving intermediaries. This data is directly related to the informant and is obtained through direct observation of the object or subject being studied. The researcher interviewed internal parties of PT Telkomsel Medan.

2. Secondary Data

Secondary data is information obtained from a second, third, or more party. The researcher will conduct interviews with *prestige* customers of PT Telkomsel Medan.

The researcher will ensure the validity of the data obtained from PT Telkomsel Medan employees to PT Telkomsel Medan's *prestige* customers who receive services in accordance with CRM activities to increase brand awareness and *prestige* customer loyalty.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Brand awareness is the ability of consumers to recognize or remember that a brand belongs to a certain product category (Tjiptono in Fachriah, 2018). The higher the consumer's awareness of a brand, the more likely it is that the brand will be considered when buying, and the chances of the brand being chosen by consumers will also increase.

Marketing through advertising is carried out using conventional media such as television, radio, print and electronic media as well as by adding new media, namely social media using the internet network. New media, namely social media, has developed quite rapidly, especially in Indonesia with its active users increasing compared to conventional media. The social media in question is X, Instagram, Facebook and Tiktok, YouTube, and websites have their own advantages and disadvantages (Adawiyah, S., Ginting, R., 2021).



Figure 1. Telkomsel Billboard
(Source: PT Telkomsel Medan, 2024)

Telkomsel has proven its position as a leading telecommunications operator in Indonesia by becoming a pioneer in various network services, ranging from 2G to 5G. Telkomsel's success in presenting these innovations makes it very well-known and familiar among the public, which strengthens its reputation as one of the largest and most trusted telecommunications providers in the country.

Almost everyone will feel very happy if they receive a gift or discount when buying a product or service. It relates to the emotional aspect of pleasure in each individual. Rewards have the meaning that one does not have to try as hard as they normally would. The practice of "cutting the compass" by giving gifts and discounts is one of the strategies in advertising. This strategy is also related to human emotions, such as pleasure, pride, and happiness (Thariq, 2021).

Telkomsel is committed to providing good service and continues to innovate to meet customer needs. Telkomsel adopts an effective marketing strategy, switching from conventional media to digital marketing through social media platforms, especially Instagram to maintain its position as the best provider in Indonesia. Telkomsel, which has a total of 2.4 million followers, has proven to be successful in reaching more customers and attracting attention through attractive promos every day.

Advertising on the internet has been included in the company's budget for promotion. Banner advertising is one way to create awareness of a corporate website and to increase traffic when placed on a website that is in accordance with a company's public target (Thariq, 2021).

Telkomsel also makes efforts to increase *brand awareness* by taking advantage of international momentum that leads to customer needs. Telkomsel takes advantage of this international momentum in the hope of improving the image of its products to the local community and also introducing its products to foreign tourists.



Figure 2. Telkomsel Open Booth at Aquabike Event
(Source: PT Telkomsel Medan, 2024)

Telkomsel Prestige is a loyalty program for Telkomsel customers. Telkomsel Prestige is categorized into customer tiers based on two criteria: subscription length and Telkomsel monthly transactions or bills. The higher the customer tier, the more benefits, services, and exclusive offers the customer gets. The initial stage carried out in optimizing *customer relationship management* communication is strategic development, where companies group their customers into categories or segments based on certain characteristics, such as demographics, behaviors, preferences, or needs.

The segmentation of prestige customers is explained in more detail in the following table:

Tier	Segment*	Criteria
Diamond	HVC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOS ≥ 6 Month • ARPU ≥ 1000K • VIP, VVIP, B0 with disc bill ≥ 2.5 Mn
Platinum	HVC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOS ≥ 6 Month • ARPU 300K -999K
Gold	HVC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOS ≥ 6 Month • ARPU 100K -299K • Fast Track
Silver	Non HVC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOS ≥ 6 Month & ARPU < 100K • LOS ≤ 6 Month

Table 1. Telkomsel Fixed and Mobile Customer Segmentation
(Source: PT Telkomsel Medan, 2024)

The second stage is that the company positions itself as a media provider by offering *loyalty* programs such as improving services that provide benefits to customers. Telkomsel offers an *attractive loyalty* program for prestige customers, which consists of two types, namely *telco benefits* and *non-telco benefits*. *Telco benefits* include additional services related to Telkomsel products while *non-telco benefits* include additional services outside of the product.



Figure 3. Visit Prestige Customers
(Source: PT Telkomsel Medan, 2024)

Telkomsel gives gifts at several important moments such as National Customer Day and Customer Birthday. Telkomsel takes advantage of the momentum of National Customer Day by visiting prestige customers in the hope of strengthening Telkomsel's relationship with customers. Telkomsel also shows an attitude of respect and care for the input provided by customers.

Telkomsel always takes advantage of the momentum in providing *treatment* to prestige customers. In 2024, Telkomsel will be 29 years old. Telkomsel held the Nonton Bareng Hepi 'Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes' event simultaneously in 13 cities through Telkomsel's loyalty program.



Figure 4. A Conversation with the Field of Television
(Source: PT Telkomsel Medan, 2024)

The next stage is multi-channel integration, which is part of Telkomsel's process in providing various forms of communication services to customers through various applications to make it easier to reach customers and make it easier for customers. Veronika is a chat-based virtual assistant to help customers access information about Telkomsel products and services anytime and anywhere such as finding the nearest GraPARI location, buying internet quota credit, redeeming Telkomsel points, paying Telkomsel Halo bills and many other services.

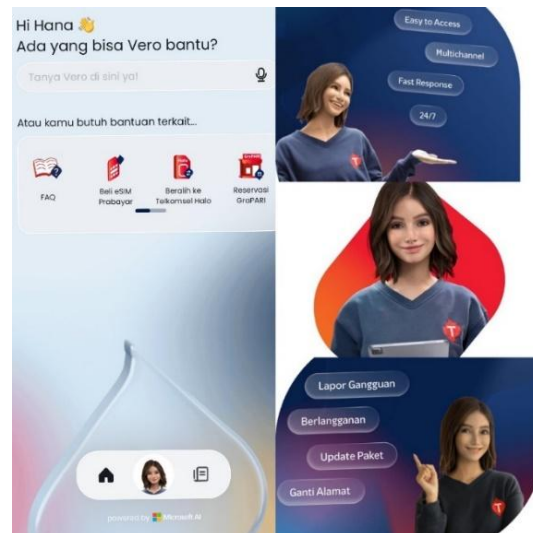


Figure 5. Veronika

(Source: PT Telkomsel Medan, 2024)

In addition to Veronika, Telkomsel also continues to bring innovations to the MyTelkomsel application. Currently, the MyTelkomsel application can not only access the needs of customers' *mobile* services but also Indihome's *fixed* services. MyTelkomsel is an application-based service launched by Telkomsel to provide easy account management and access customer services using smartphones.

MyTelkomsel has several benefits that customers can enjoy, including the following:

1. Check credit and internet quota.
2. Buy data, SMS and phone plans.
3. Swap Points.
4. Recharge the credit.
5. Enable or disable the service.
6. Get information and promos.
7. Participate in the prize program.

The next stage is information management. This stage is the process by which Telkomsel collects, stores, and analyzes customer data as a whole. Telkomsel will use the data that has been obtained to analyze the usage patterns of its services, one of which is for the improvement and development of the provision of Telkomsel services and products both for now and in the future and in order to improve the quality of services that will be provided to customers.

The last stage is performance evaluation. Telkomsel conducts a systematic and thorough evaluation of employee performance to ensure that each individual makes a real contribution to the achievement of the company's goals. This evaluation not only highlights the final results, but also assesses work processes, initiatives, collaboration, and adaptability to changes and challenges of the dynamic digital industry.



Figure 6. Performance Evaluation of Telkomsel Medan
(Source: PT Telkomsel Medan, 2024)

PT Telkomsel Medan strives to optimize CRM to expand brand reach and retain customers. However, even though it has been done optimally, a number of obstacles still hinder CRM optimization in increasing brand awareness and customer loyalty.

The results of the study found that the obstacles that occurred arose in terms of technology and human resources. From a technological perspective, one of the main obstacles is the limitations in DSC applications that are not fully optimal in supporting customer data management and demand escalation, such as package changes. In addition, limitations in data integration between fixed and mobile services often lead to difficulties in providing consistent and relevant information to customers.

Human resources are also an equally important factor. Based on the data findings in the field, another difficulty lies in the difference in language understanding between PT Telkomsel Medan employees and customers. Many customers find it difficult if the language used is too formal or standard, so PT Telkomsel Medan employees must be more flexible in adapting the way of communication to different customer needs.

CONCLUSION

Optimizing customer relationship management communication in increasing *brand awareness* and *loyalty of fixed and mobile* customers at PT Telkomsel Medan takes advantage of every momentum, both national and international, such as the Aquabike Event to introduce Telkomsel products to both local and foreign tourists. Telkomsel also places ads on digital platforms such as Instagram to expand interaction and increase *brand awareness*. PT Telkomsel Medan implements CRM by conducting the first stage, namely segmenting prestige customers according to the number of transactions and subscription length. The second stage is value creation, which is done by providing rewards and loyalty to customers by taking advantage of momentum. The third stage is multi-channel integration, namely by providing useful applications to more easily reach customers by integrating AI systems into the MyTelkomsel application. The next stage is information management, which is Telkomsel

collects customer data on the Digital Smart Care (DSC) portal and manages it for the company's interests and needs. The last stage in the CRM concept is the evaluation of work that is carried out every month.

The obstacle to optimizing customer relationship management communication in increasing brand awareness and loyalty of *fixed* and *mobile customers* at PT Telkomsel Medan lies in the limitations of technology, namely the DSC application which does not fully support customer data management and data integration problems between *fixed* and *mobile* services which leads to difficulties in providing consistent information to customers. In addition, another challenge is the integration of the MyIndihome application into MyTelkomsel which requires more education for customers. Meanwhile, in terms of human resources, communication problems between PT Telkomsel Medan employees and customers arise due to miscommunication, namely differences in language understanding, with customers because the language used is too formal.

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