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**BRANDING STRATEGY FOR LOCAL BASKETBALL CLUBS
THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG GEN Z:
A LITERATURE STUDY**

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Abstract

The development of digital technology has revolutionized the way local sports clubs build brand identity and interact with their audiences, especially Generation Z, which is the most dominant group of social media users today. This research aims to examine the branding strategies implemented by local basketball clubs through social media platforms to build engagement and loyalty among Gen Z. The methods used include literature review and secondary data analysis of the social media activities of three local basketball clubs on TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter. The analysis results show that TikTok and Instagram are the most effective media in reaching Generation Z, marked by high engagement rates in the form of likes, comments, and content sharing. In contrast, Twitter shows lower engagement levels. This research concludes that the success of branding strategies lies in the utilization of creative, authentic visual content that aligns with the values and communication style of Gen Z. These findings provide practical implications for local basketball clubs in designing relevant and impactful digital approaches in the era of social media-based marketing.

Keywords: Branding; Digital Strategy; Generation Z; Local Basketball; Social Media

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology, particularly social media, has revolutionized the way sports organizations build, maintain, and expand their audience. In this context, local basketball clubs not only function as sports entities but also as brands that must compete in an increasingly crowded digital ecosystem. One of the demographic groups most affected by this dynamic is Generation Z (Gen Z), which refers to the generation born between 1997 and 2012, known to be very familiar with technology and having high expectations for authenticity, interactivity, and social value from the brands they support Williams (2022); Wallace (2021);(Okilanda et al., 2021). Gen Z is not just a passive consumer but also a prosumer actively involved in creating and sharing content.

They are more responsive to authentic, short, and emotional visual messages, and tend to use social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube as

primary sources of information and entertainment, including in sports Kaplan & Haenlein (2010); Stelzner (2023). In this landscape, social media is not just a communication channel, but also a primary branding strategy for local sports clubs looking to reach the Gen Z market. Unfortunately, digital branding in the context of local basketball clubs in Indonesia has received little academic attention. Many clubs still rely on conventional approaches to building community and have yet to fully utilize the potential of social media to create meaningful and interactive experiences. However, according to McCarthy et al (2014), effective sports brand management requires a deep understanding of the target audience's characteristics and the media used. Branding is no longer just about logos and slogans, but encompasses consistent digital narratives, appealing visual presence, and active fan participation. Previous studies have shown that professional sports clubs that successfully build high engagement on social media demonstrate increased fan loyalty, higher ticket sales, and an expanded online community base Pronschinske et al. (2012) ; Geurin & Burch (2017). However, the local context and resource limitations of small clubs in Indonesia pose unique challenges in implementing digital branding strategies. Therefore, this study aims to explore how branding strategies through social media can be effectively utilized by local basketball clubs to reach Gen Z. The research is conducted with a literature study approach and secondary data analysis, focusing on ⁵ the most popular social media platforms among Gen Z, namely TikTok, Instagram, and twitter By examining best practices and identifying digital engagement patterns, this research aims to provide practical recommendations for local sports clubs in designing relevant, cost-effective, and impactful branding strategies.

METHOD

This research adopts a deep qualitative literature study approach by collecting and reviewing relevant academic and practical sources from various scientific databases, such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and leading international sports marketing journals. Literature data were collected from publications between 2015 and 2024 to ensure relevance with the latest trends in social media and Gen Z behavior. The main sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books

related to sports marketing and digital communication, as well as industry research reports from agencies like We Are Social and Nielsen. The analysis was conducted thematically, identifying key concepts related to branding strategies through social media and characteristics of the Gen Z audience. This analysis focuses on how local basketball clubs can leverage social media to enhance engagement and fan loyalty through an authentic and personal approach.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Branding in the context of local basketball clubs is not just about building an appealing image, but also creating an emotional experience that deeply connects fans with the club's values. Sports branding is an identity felt by fans that combines history, achievements, social values, and community aspirations. In a local context, basketball clubs must elevate narratives that are relevant to the culture and aspirations of the surrounding community to build strong bonds with fans. Generation Z, with its uniqueness as digital natives, has a very different content consumption style compared to previous generations. Turner (2021) suggested that Gen Z prefers quick, visual, and easily digestible content, while also prioritizing authenticity and interactivity in their media consumption.

They tend to avoid content that seems too formal or dishonest advertising, so the communication strategy must be made personal and prioritize two-way engagement. Social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok become the main channels where local basketball clubs can optimally leverage branding potential. Visual and interactive content can significantly increase fan engagement. Short videos showcasing match highlights, training activities, or personal stories of young athletes are very effective in attracting the attention of Gen Z. Additionally, interactions through polling features, comments, and Q&A can create a strong sense of engagement and community among young fans Smith & Stewart (2015). Another study by Hall (2020) added that collaboration with influencers and young athletes as brand ambassadors can enhance the credibility and appeal of the brand, as Gen Z tends to trust recommendations from figures they consider authentic and relatable. Furthermore, storytelling is at the core of branding strategies that can build fan loyalty.

Narratives about the struggles of the club, values of sportsmanship, and personal relationships between players and fans carry strong emotional value. These narratives should not only be conveyed through text but particularly through inspiring and authentic visual content Greenhalgh (2017). The use of social media allows clubs to adapt these stories flexibly and in real-time according to feedback from fans, thereby fostering more dynamic and sustainable engagement. In addition, building an active online community on social media also supports brand strengthening of the club and creates long-term loyalty Wagner (2019). Although social media offers great opportunities, the main challenge lies in the consistency and relevance of the content that must be continually updated to keep up with trends and the rapidly changing preferences of Gen Z. Local basketball clubs need to have a digital communication team that understands digital culture and is able to innovate in presenting authentic, engaging, and interactive content. Failure to adapt these strategies can lead to decreased engagement and weakened brand perception among young fans Brown & Wensley (2019).

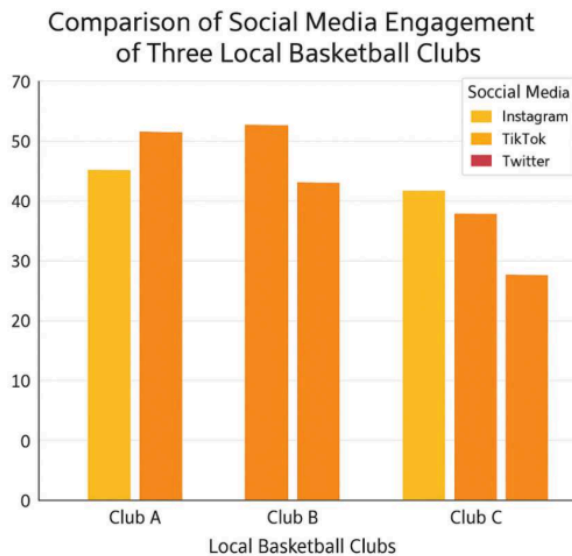


Figure 1. Social Media

The analysis results show that TikTok and Instagram are the platforms with the highest engagement levels. Club A recorded 12,000 engagements on TikTok, far exceeding the engagement on Twitter. Overall, TikTok has an advantage in delivering creative content and going viral quickly, while Instagram excels in visual branding and interaction through stories and reels. On the other hand, Twitter shows the lowest engagement, indicating a lack of relevance of the platform to Gen Z preferences.

Discussion

From ⁴the results of this literature study, it can be concluded that the branding strategy for local basketball clubs in the era of social media must be rooted in a deep understanding of the psychological characteristics and digital behavior of Gen Z. Authenticity and interaction become two main aspects that should be the primary focus of every digital branding activity.

Social media provides an effective communication channel to reach Gen Z broadly and intensively, but this requires an approach that is not only one-way but also involves the audience in the process of content creation and distribution. A strong storytelling approach and creative visual content must be combined with interactive activities to create a deeper emotional engagement. This aligns with brand engagement theory, which indicates that emotional relationships built through digital communication will enhance fan loyalty (Calder, Malthouse, & Schaedel, 2009);(Arisman & Agun Guntara, 2021). In addition, collaboration with young athletes and influencers who already have a Gen Z follower base can accelerate the process of building a relevant and trusted image of the club among the audience. However, the implementation of this strategy is not without challenges, particularly in terms of resources and the adaptability of local clubs that may not be fully prepared for the latest technological advancements and digital trends. Therefore, developing the capacity of the club's digital marketing team and conducting regular evaluations of content effectiveness is crucial to ensure a sustainable branding strategy with a positive impact.

CONCLUSION

This literature study emphasizes that local basketball club branding strategies through social media must prioritize an authentic, personal, and interactive approach to meet the needs and preferences of Generation Z. Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are strategic and effective platforms for conveying storytelling, building communities, and increasing engagement among young fans. Collaborating with young athletes as influencers is also an important strategy in strengthening brand credibility. Consistency and innovation in presenting content are key factors for success in maintaining fan loyalty in this digital era. Further research with empirical case studies is highly recommended to test the effectiveness of the strategies identified in the local context of Indonesia.

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