

LAZISMU Marketing Communication Strategy as an Integral Part of Increasing Community Independence in Medan City

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Abstract

Poverty remains a big problem in Indonesia, including in the city of Medan. According to BPS data, the percentage of poor people in Indonesia decreased from 9.57% in September 2022 to 9.36% in March 2023. This decline was also seen in North Sumatra, from 8.33% to 8.15% in the same period. LAZISMU, as a zakat institution, uses various marketing communication strategies to increase public awareness and participation in poverty alleviation programs in Medan City. The approaches used include social media, collaboration with local media, and community events such as bazaars and workshops. Philip Kotler's marketing theory is the basis for this research methodology. The research results show that the communication strategy implemented was successful in increasing public awareness and participation, although there were still obstacles related to limited funds. LAZISMU is expected to be able to develop more effective fundraising strategies and collaborate with various parties to increase the flow of funds and program sustainability.

Introduction

Poverty in Indonesia remains a worrying problem. According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of poor people in March 2023 was recorded at 9.36 percent, a decrease from 9.57 percent in September 2022 and 9.54 percent in March 2022. Despite this decline, there are still around 25.90 million people living below the poverty line in March 2023, a decrease from 26.36 million people in September 2022 and 26.16 million people in March 2022. This decline illustrates that efforts and policy interventions are starting to show results, although the challenges faced remain big (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023).

In March 2023, the percentage of poor people in urban areas was 7.29 percent, decreasing from 7.53 percent in September 2022. On the other hand, the percentage of poor people in rural areas also decreased, from 12.36 percent in September 2022 to 12.22 percent in March 2023. This decrease indicates an improvement in people's welfare in the two regions. The number of urban poor people decreased by 0.24 million people, from 11.98 million people in September 2022 to 11.74 million people in March 2023. Meanwhile, the number of poor people in rural areas decreased by 0.22 million people, from 14, 38 million people in September 2022 to 14.16 million people in March 2023 (Statistik, 2023).

The poverty line in March 2023 was recorded at IDR 550,458 per capita per month, with a composition of the food poverty line of IDR 408,522 (74.21 percent) and the non-food poverty line of IDR 141,936 (25.79 percent). With an average poor household having 4.71 members, the poverty line per household is IDR 2,592,657 per month. This data shows the level of basic

needs that must be met by poor families to get out of poverty, as well as showing the difference in needs between food and non-food (Statistik, 2023).

In North Sumatra, the poverty rate has also decreased. In March 2023, the percentage of poor people was recorded at 8.15 percent, down from 8.33 percent in September 2022. This decrease is equivalent to around 22.4 thousand fewer poor people in the last semester. The percentage of poor people in urban areas decreased by 0.40 points to 8.23 percent, while in rural areas it increased by 0.07 points to 8.03 percent. The poverty line in this area is recorded at IDR 602,999 per capita per month (Hiktaop et al., 2020).

Apart from decreasing the poverty rate, the Poverty Depth Index (P1) and the Poverty Severity Index (P2) also showed a decline. P1 fell from 1.411 in September 2022 to 1.261 in March 2023, while P2 fell from 0.339 to 0.324. A decrease in P1 indicates that the average consumption expenditure of the poor is getting closer to the poverty line, reducing the existing gap. The decrease in P2 shows that the inequality in consumption expenditure among the poor is also reduced, indicating an improvement in income distribution among the poor (Utami et al., 2021).

Marketing communications plays an important role in increasing public awareness about poverty alleviation programs. LAZISMU in Medan City, for example, uses various media to convey information about their programs. Social media, websites, brochures and other promotional materials are used to spread information effectively. With clear and easily accessible information, people become more aware of the help available to those in need (Mulitawati & Retnasary, 2020).

To increase reach, LAZISMU collaborates with local media such as newspapers, radio and television stations (Zainuddin et al., 2020). This media coverage helps increase public awareness of the problem of poverty and the efforts being made to overcome it (Rahmat & Nurzaman, 2019). In addition, community events such as seminars, workshops and community meetings are held to discuss poverty issues and find solutions together. These forums are also a place for the public to get information about available programs.

Emphasizing transparency and accountability in the use of zakat, infaq and shadaqah funds is the key to building public trust in LAZISMU. By submitting financial reports and performance results regularly, the public can see the positive impact of their contributions. In addition, communicating success stories and testimonials from aid recipients can inspire people to participate in efforts to eradicate poverty.

LAZISMU also organizes outreach and training programs on financial management, entrepreneurship and other skills. This program not only increases awareness of the assistance available, but also helps increase the community's economic independence. The use of traditional media such as local radio and regional newspapers to convey information ensures that the information can be accessed by all levels of society, including those who do not have internet access (Mulitawati & Retnasary, 2020).

Regular program monitoring and evaluation is very important to ensure the program achieves the desired goals and has a positive impact. With these steps, LAZISMU can expand its positive impact in Medan City, help people escape poverty, and improve the overall quality of life. Collaboration with government, private companies, and other community organizations is also important to expand the reach and effectiveness of programs.

Methods

This research method uses a qualitative approach to explore LAZISMU's marketing communications strategy in Medan (Archibald et al., 2019). This approach was chosen because

of its relevance in exploring an in-depth understanding of the context and implementation of complex marketing strategies in charitable organizations. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with various related parties at LAZISMU Medan, including senior management, operational staff, and beneficiaries of the zakat, infaq and shadaqah programs. Participatory observation was also carried out to directly understand the dynamics of internal communication and interaction between LAZISMU and the community (Dahal, 2022).

The collected data will be analyzed using a descriptive approach to describe in detail the marketing communication strategies that have been implemented by LAZISMU (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). This analysis will focus on the effectiveness of this strategy in supporting the economic independence of local communities, in line with LAZISMU's main objectives. Strategy evaluation will include aspects such as public response to marketing messages, penetration of LAZISMU programs in various market segments, and the resulting social impact.

In the context of Kotler's marketing communications theory, this research will explore key elements such as market segmentation to identify and adapt programs to the specific needs of society (Kotler, 2017). In addition, positioning will be explored to understand how LAZISMU differentiates itself from other charitable institutions in the minds of the public. Marketing mix management will also be analyzed to assess the extent to which the combination of these elements influences the effectiveness of communication and success in achieving the goal of economic independence.

By investigating proven marketing theories such as those developed by Kotler, this research seeks to provide concrete recommendations to LAZISMU to improve their marketing communications strategy (Mulitawati & Retnasary, 2020). It is hoped that this research will not only provide in-depth insight into the implementation of theory in a practical context, but will also make a positive contribution in strengthening social impact and economic independence through LAZISMU programs in Medan City.

Results and Discussion

History of LAZISMU Medan City

LAZISMU is a national level zakat institution that focuses on community empowerment through the productive use of zakat, infaq, waqf and other charitable funds. These funds come from various sources such as individuals, institutions, companies and other agencies. As a zakat institution, LAZISMU is committed to utilizing the funds received effectively and efficiently to provide a positive impact on society, especially in overcoming the problem of poverty and improving social welfare.

Indonesia still faces major challenges in terms of poverty, ignorance and a low human development index, which are largely caused by a weak social justice system. The potential for zakat, infaq and waqf in Indonesia is quite high considering that this country has the largest Muslim population in the world. However, this potential has not been managed optimally so it has not had a significant impact in solving existing social problems. Better management is needed to maximize the potential of zakat to promote social justice and human development (Wicaksono, 2014).

LAZISMU was founded with the aim of becoming a zakat management institution with modern management that can solve social problems effectively. With a work culture that is trustworthy, professional and transparent, LAZISMU strives to become a trusted zakat institution. Public trust in LAZISMU is increasing along with creative and innovative efforts in developing zakat

utilization programs that are able to answer the challenges of change and growing social problems (LAZISMU, 2024).

The founding of LAZISMU in 2002 marked the beginning of this institution nationally, with the central organization later forming branches at provincial and regional levels throughout Indonesia. This process aims to expand the reach and strengthen the organizational structure, so that it can serve the community more effectively and efficiently. However, until 2016, LAZISMU in several areas such as Medan City had not received official structural recognition, which hampered the operation of this institution outside the internal scope of Muhammadiyah (Lubis, 2024).

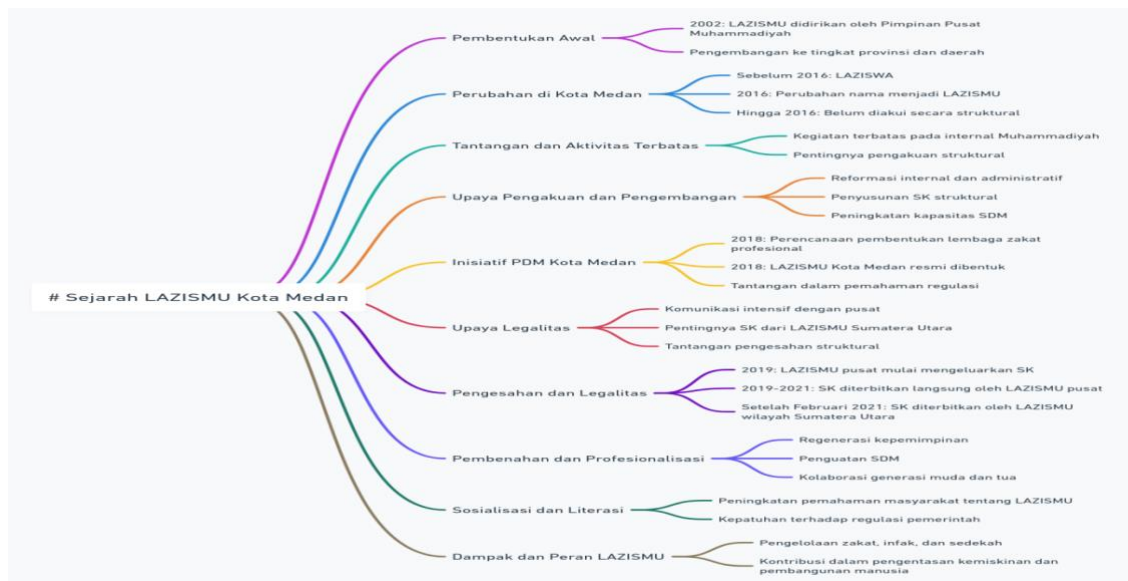


Figure 1. Lazismu history of Medan City

To strengthen LAZISMU's position and recognition, internal reform and administrative improvements are the main focus. This includes the preparation of Decree Letters (SK) that are recognized by the center and regions, as well as increasing the capacity of human resources to support institutional operations. Official recognition as a national zakat institution will open up opportunities for LAZISMU to collaborate with various parties, both government and private, in efforts to empower the people's economy and alleviate poverty. In this way, LAZISMU can contribute more significantly to improving the quality of life of the wider community.

The image is a mind map that summarizes the history of LAZISMU Medan City. Starting from its formation in 2002 by the Muhammadiyah Central Leadership, continued with regional level development before 2016. In 2016, structural changes occurred in Medan City. The initial challenge was limited activity within Muhammadiyah. Recognition and development efforts since 2018 include internal reform and increasing HR capacity. Initiatives from the Medan City PDM include the re-establishment of LAZISMU in 2018. Legality was obtained through intensive communication with the center and the issuance of a decree by central LAZISMU and the North Sumatra region in the 2019-2021 period. The improvement process includes leadership regeneration and increasing HR professionalism. Socialization and literacy are increased to improve public understanding of zakat, infaq and alms, as well as adjustments to government regulations. LAZISMU's impact can be seen in its contribution to poverty alleviation and human development.

Understanding the importance of regulations in the LAZISMU legality process in North Sumatra encourages significant improvements and adjustments. This regulation gives LAZISMU the authority at the provincial level to ratify LAZISMU at the district and city levels, ensuring all branches operate in accordance with the national legal framework. This step is essential so that LAZISMU can carry out its functions optimally in managing zakat, infaq and alms, in accordance with applicable regulations.

Based on an interview with the Chair of LAZISMU Medan City, Muhammad Arifin Lubis, the implementation of this regulation is expected to improve the legality and operational structure of LAZISMU in North Sumatra, including Medan City. Strong and structured legality will increase LAZISMU's credibility and effectiveness in providing services to the community. It is hoped that each branch can contribute maximally to empowerment and poverty alleviation. Since its inception, LAZISMU has attempted to fulfill regulations for existence at every administrative level.

However, since 2018, LAZISMU's legal process has not been running according to ideal standards. Regulations require that regional LAZISMU operational permits be issued by regional LAZISMU, namely North Sumatra. This understanding encourages improvements and adjustments to the legality of LAZISMU in North Sumatra. In January 2019, LAZISMU Muhammadiyah Central Leadership issued an operational permit for LAZISMU Medan City. This legality was extended in January 2024, ensuring that LAZISMU Medan City's operations comply with applicable legal provisions and can continue to run well.

The structural improvement initiative was carried out by PDM by placing the younger generation in the management of LAZISMU Medan City, starting from a recitation meeting with the Main Director of LAZISMU Muhammadiyah Central Leadership, Mas Andar. Collaboration between young and old people is considered essential for the sustainability and effectiveness of zakat, infaq and alms management. The younger generation brings innovation and new enthusiasm, while the older generation offers experience and wisdom. This synergy allows LAZISMU Medan City to develop and make a greater contribution to alleviating poverty and improving community welfare.

Literacy and outreach regarding the importance of zakat management through official institutions such as LAZISMU needs to be improved. Government regulations require the management of zakat and infaq by officially recognized institutions to increase accountability and transparency. This adjustment is important so that zakat and infaq management is carried out in accordance with applicable legal provisions. With better understanding, the public, especially Muhammadiyah members, are expected to be more supportive of this policy. This increase in literacy and socialization supports joint efforts to eradicate poverty and improve community welfare.

Marketing Communication Strategy of the Muhammadiyah Zakat, Infaq and Shadaqah Institution (LAZISMU) in Increasing Community Independence in Medan City

Based on the results of interviews with MSME catering aid recipient Anwar Jambak, LAZISMU Medan City consistently holds various direct events in the community, such as bazaars and workshops, as part of community empowerment efforts. These events aim to provide practical training and open business opportunities for the local community, especially micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Through bazaars, people can promote products directly, while workshops provide opportunities to gain new knowledge and skills that can improve product quality and competitiveness.

Apart from direct activities in the community, LAZISMU Medan City also actively uses social media as an effective communication tool. Social media platforms are used to disseminate

information about programs and activities that are being and will be implemented. This includes event promotions, activity reports, as well as various educational content about zakat, infaq and alms. By utilizing social media, LAZISMU Medan City can reach a wider audience and interact directly with the community, thereby increasing participation and support for the programs being run (Suwandi & Samri, 2022).

LAZISMU Medan City's activity on social media also serves to invite the public to be more involved in the activities being held. Through various online campaigns, the public is invited to participate in empowerment programs, both as beneficiaries and as supporters and donors. Thus, LAZISMU Medan City not only plays a role in economic empowerment, but also builds collective awareness about the importance of social solidarity and cooperation in overcoming the problem of poverty and improving community welfare.

Based on the results of interviews with MSME beverage aid recipient Muhammad Reza, social media such as Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp are very effective tools for LAZISMU Medan City in disseminating information and increasing community participation. Instagram and Facebook are used to publish various activities and programs visually and interactively, so as to attract the attention of a wide audience. Through this platform, LAZISMU Medan City can share photos and videos of activities, information about empowerment programs, as well as success stories from beneficiaries, all of which play a role in building trust and community involvement (Moegiri & Saebani, 2021).

Table 1. Communication Strategy

| Activities/Communication | Description | Objective |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Bazaar | Enables MSMEs to promote products directly to the public. | Increasing sales of MSME products, providing a direct promotional platform. |
| Workshops | Providing training and new skills to MSMEs to improve product quality. | Strengthening the capacity and sustainability of MSMEs. |
| Social media | Using Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp to spread information and interact with the community. | Expanding audience reach, increasing community participation. |
| Online Campaign | Encourage community participation in empowerment programs. | Inviting the community to be actively involved in economic empowerment programs. |
| Muhammadiyah Branch Study | Communication with older and active community members at the local level. | Ensure participation and support from all levels of society. |
| Evaluation Of Social Response | Monitor and evaluate public responses to activities on social media. | Measure communication effectiveness and adjust communication strategies. |
| Donation Acceptance | Measuring the amount and quality of donations as an indicator of public trust in LAZISMU. | Ensure program sustainability and development of empowerment initiatives. |
| Interaction In Whatsapp Groups | Facilitate discussions and feedback from the community via WhatsApp groups. | Increase community involvement in dialogue and coordination of activities. |
| Provision Of Detailed Information | Strengthen program content and explanations to ensure good understanding from the public. | Ensure that the information conveyed is clear and comprehensive. |

WhatsApp, as a more personal and direct communication platform, is used to build closer relationships with communities and beneficiaries. WhatsApp groups enable fast and efficient dissemination of information, as well as providing a space for discussion and feedback. By using WhatsApp, LAZISMU Medan City can provide the latest updates on activities and programs, answer questions in real-time, and coordinate various activities more easily and quickly (Auliannisa & Hatta, 2022).

Effective use of social media not only helps in disseminating information, but also in gathering support and active participation from the community. Through an integrated communication strategy, LAZISMU Medan City is able to reach a wider audience, increase awareness about the importance of zakat and infaq, and invite more people to get involved in economic and social empowerment efforts. Thus, social media has become a vital tool in supporting LAZISMU Medan City's mission to eradicate poverty and improve community welfare.

Based on the results of interviews with MSME grocery aid recipient Juliana Harahap, the effectiveness of programs and activities run by LAZISMU Medan City is often measured through various indicators, such as the number of participants attending events held, the size of incoming donations, as well as the response and interaction of the community in social media. The presence of participants at events such as bazaars, workshops and seminars is an important indicator, because it reflects the level of community participation and interest in the programs offered. The more participants who attend, the greater the impact and reach of the program.

The amount of donations received is also a key indicator in measuring the success of LAZISMU Medan City. The increase in the number of donations shows the high level of public trust in this institution and its programs. Incoming donations are used to fund various empowerment programs and social activities, so success in raising funds is crucial for the sustainability and development of these programs. Thus, the size of the donations received not only reflects financial support, but also the trust and commitment of the community in supporting LAZISMU's mission.

Community response and interaction on social media is also an important measuring tool for LAZISMU Medan City. Through platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp, LAZISMU can monitor public responses to posts and campaigns carried out. The number of likes, shares, comments and direct messages gives an idea of the extent to which the information conveyed is received and appreciated by the public. This interaction also allows LAZISMU to get real-time feedback, which is very useful for evaluating and improving future programs. By understanding the community's response, LAZISMU can continue to adjust its communication strategy to be more effective and targeted, so that the mission of empowerment and poverty alleviation can be better achieved (Nur Indah Fahrizka et al., 2023).

LAZISMU Medan City adjusts its communication strategy based on different audience segmentations to ensure the messages conveyed are effective and right on target. To reach the younger generation, LAZISMU utilizes social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp. This social media was chosen because of its widespread use among young people and its ability to convey information quickly and interactively. Through attractive visual content and creative digital campaigns, LAZISMU can increase the participation and involvement of the younger generation in various social programs and activities.

Using traditional forums such as Muhammadiyah branch studies to communicate with older members and those active in local communities. Muhammadiyah branch studies are an effective platform for conveying information directly, discussing important issues, and

gathering support from community members. Through this approach, LAZISMU can ensure that all levels of society are involved and contribute to the empowerment and poverty alleviation programs being implemented.

This segmented communication approach allows LAZISMU Medan City to reach a wider and more diverse audience. By adapting communication methods according to the characteristics and preferences of each group, LAZISMU can increase the effectiveness of the messages conveyed and ensure that important information regarding programs and activities is well received. This also helps in building stronger trust and support from all levels of society, so that the mission of economic and social empowerment can be achieved more optimally.

Feedback received by LAZISMU Medan City is generally positive, with many people stating that they have become more understanding and interested in taking part in the programs offered. Participants often mentioned that through effective communication, both through social media and studies of Muhammadiyah branches, they received clearer information regarding the objectives and benefits of the various activities held. This increases community participation and encourages more individuals to get involved in the empowerment programs run by LAZISMU.

Not all feedback received is always positive. Some people said that the information presented was sometimes unclear or incomplete. This lack of clarity in information can cause confusion and hinder optimal participation from people who want to contribute to or receive benefits from the LAZISMU program. Therefore, it is important for LAZISMU Medan City to continue to evaluate and improve its communication strategy, ensuring that all information conveyed is easy to understand and comprehensive.

In response to such feedback, LAZISMU can strengthen its communications efforts by providing more details and explanations about programs. This can be done through improving content on social media, providing more complete information material on the official website, as well as through more interactive question and answer sessions in the study of Muhammadiyah branches. In this way, LAZISMU can continue to improve the effectiveness of its communications, ensuring that any information conveyed can be received clearly and encouraging active participation from all levels of society.

Barriers to Marketing Communication of the Muhammadiyah Zakat, Infaq and Shadaqah Institution (LAZISMU) in Increasing Community Independence in the City of Medan

The number of participants who can receive benefits from LAZISMU Medan City programs is often hampered by limited funds. Lack of funding not only limits the number of participants, but also reduces the quality and reach of programs. Therefore, finding a solution to the funding problem is a top priority for LAZISMU. To overcome limited funds, LAZISMU collaborates with various parties, including private companies and non-profit organizations.

Based on the results of an interview with the recipient of banana chips MSME assistance, Delila, the biggest opportunity faced by LAZISMU Medan City is increasing technological literacy and community activity on social media. As more and more people become technology savvy, the dissemination of information becomes faster and more efficient. Social media such as Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp allow LAZISMU to reach a wider audience at a relatively low cost. Through this platform, information regarding empowerment programs and social activities can be conveyed effectively, increasing community awareness and participation (Fitriyah et al., 2021).

High community activity on social media also makes it easier for LAZISMU to invite more people to join programs. Interesting and informative content can be easily shared, creating a viral effect that expands the reach of information. In addition, direct interaction with the community through comments, messages and discussions on social media allows LAZISMU to build closer and more responsive relationships. This not only increases participation but also public trust in LAZISMU (Nasution & Nasution, 2021).

By taking advantage of this opportunity, LAZISMU Medan City can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of programs. The use of technology and social media as the main communication tools allows LAZISMU to optimize existing resources, reach more beneficiaries, and ensure that information about empowerment programs is always up to date and easy to access. With adaptive and innovative communication strategies, LAZISMU can continue to develop and have a wider positive impact on the people of Medan City.

Based on the results of an interview with the recipient of grocery MSME assistance, Juliana Harahap, one of the biggest challenges faced by LAZISMU Medan City is the lack of adequate funds to support planned empowerment programs. These financial limitations can hinder the implementation of various important initiatives, from skills training to capital assistance for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Without sufficient financial support, it is difficult for LAZISMU to achieve the desired scope and impact in efforts to improve community welfare.

Lack of funding also limits LAZISMU's ability to innovate and expand programs. Innovation is needed to adapt the program to the needs of the growing community, while expansion is needed to reach more beneficiaries in various regions. Limited funding means LAZISMU has to prioritize some programs over others, which may result in delays or reduced scale of much-needed initiatives.

Based on the results of interviews with Delila, overcoming this challenge requires a more effective fundraising strategy and diversification of funding sources. LAZISMU needs to strengthen collaboration with various parties, including the government, private sector and individual donors, to increase the flow of funds. In addition, utilizing digital platforms for donation campaigns and transparency in financial management can increase public trust and participation in supporting LAZISMU programs. With this approach, it is hoped that LAZISMU can overcome funding constraints and continue to make a significant contribution to empowering and improving community welfare.

Managing zakat funds effectively is one of the main keys for LAZISMU Medan City in carrying out empowerment programs. Good management of zakat funds involves transparency and accountability, ensuring that every rupiah received is used according to the stated goals. With a transparent management system, LAZISMU can build public trust, which in turn can increase the amount of zakat received and expand the impact of the programs it runs.

Apart from managing zakat funds, LAZISMU Medan City is also actively seeking grant funds from various sources, including the government, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. These grant funds are very important to complement zakat funds and enable the implementation of broader and more diverse programs. By getting grant support, LAZISMU can develop new initiatives and strengthen existing programs, so that they can reach more beneficiaries and have a more significant impact.

Utilizing online platforms is another effective strategy used by LAZISMU to reach more people and raise funds. Digital platforms such as social media, websites and online donation applications allow LAZISMU to communicate directly with a wide audience, disseminate information about programs and activities, and invite the public to participate in fundraising.

Through creative and transparent online campaigns, LAZISMU can increase community awareness and involvement, as well as optimize fund collection to support sustainable empowerment programs (Normasyhuri et al., 2022).

By utilizing technology and social media, as well as collaborating with various parties, LAZISMU Medan City is able to overcome various challenges and increase the effectiveness of its empowerment programs. This approach not only helps in disseminating information and increasing community participation but also in raising funds and support for more innovative and far-reaching programs. Through adaptive and collaborative strategies, LAZISMU Medan City continues to strive to create a more independent and prosperous society.

Conclusion

This discusses the important role of marketing communications carried out by the Zakat, Infaq and Shadaqah Muhammadiyah Institution (LAZISMU) in an effort to increase community independence in the city of Medan. Against the backdrop of high poverty rates in Indonesia, especially in North Sumatra, LAZISMU uses various media and communication strategies to increase public awareness and participation in their programs. This strategy involves the use of social media, collaboration with local media, and organizing community events aimed at conveying information and building closer relationships with the community.

The methodology used in this research is based on Philip Kotler's marketing theory which emphasizes fulfilling the needs and desires of the target market to achieve organizational goals. This theory emphasizes the importance of a deep understanding of markets and consumers as the basis for a successful marketing strategy. LAZISMU applies this theory by identifying the needs of the poor in Medan City and developing programs designed to meet these needs effectively and efficiently. This approach not only focuses on short-term transactions but also on long-term relationships that benefit both parties.

The research results show that the marketing communications carried out by LAZISMU have succeeded in increasing public awareness and participation in poverty alleviation programs. LAZISMU uses social media effectively to disseminate information and invite the public to participate in various activities. Apart from that, community events such as bazaars and workshops have also proven effective in providing training and opening business opportunities for the community. However, the main challenge faced is limited funding which hampers the reach and quality of the program. To overcome this, LAZISMU needs to develop a more effective fundraising strategy and collaborate with various parties to increase the flow of funds and the sustainability of their programs.

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