

Experience Marketing Strategy for West Java Aviation School Attracts Gen Z Interest

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Abstract

This study examined the role of experience marketing strategies in attracting Generation Z's interest in aviation schools in West Java, with a particular focus on social media content and virtual reality (VR) tour experiences. The rapid growth of aviation education institutions in West Java has intensified competition, prompting schools to adopt experiential marketing approaches that emphasize immersive and interactive engagement. A quantitative explanatory approach was employed by collecting data from 215 Generation Z respondents who were prospective students of aviation schools in West Java. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicated that experiential social media content had a significant positive effect on brand experience and interest in enrolling, while virtual reality tours significantly enhanced perceived experiential value and institutional attractiveness. Furthermore, brand experience was found to mediate the relationship between experience marketing strategies and Generation Z's enrollment interest. The findings highlight the importance of integrating digital experiential tools into marketing strategies for aviation education institutions to strengthen competitiveness and support the development of aviation human resources in West Java.

Keywords: Experience Marketing, Social Media Content, Virtual Reality Tour, Generation Z, Aviation School.

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1. Introduction

The rapid development of the national aviation industry has driven an increase in the need for competent and competitive aviation human resources [1]. West Java, as one of the provinces with the largest population in Indonesia and its geographical proximity to the national economic center, has great potential for the development of aviation education [2]. The existence of aviation schools in West Java is expected to support the improvement of human resources in the air transportation sector and contribute to the development of creative and technology-based industries in the region.

Along with the increasing number of aviation education institutions, competition in attracting prospective students has also become more intense. Generation Z, which currently dominates the prospective student age group, has different characteristics compared to previous generations. This generation is known as digital natives who are highly dependent on digital technology, social media, and visual and interactive experiences in their decision-making process [3]. Therefore, conventional marketing strategies are considered ineffective in attracting Generation Z to choose a particular educational institution [4].

One approach that is considered relevant in this context is experience marketing. Experience marketing emphasizes the creation of experiences that involve the emotional, sensory, cognitive, and behavioral aspects

of consumers, thereby building a stronger attachment to a brand or institution [5]. In the context of education, this strategy not only functions as a promotional tool but also as a means of communicating the values, culture, and excellence of the institution to prospective students [6].

The use of experience-based social media content is one form of experience marketing implementation that is becoming increasingly popular [7] [8]. Social media allows flight schools to present visual, narrative, and interactive content such as simulations of practical activities, student experiences, and realistic learning environments. This type of content is believed to be able to build positive perceptions and increase Generation Z's interest in educational institutions [9].

In addition to social media, the development of virtual reality (VR) technology has opened up new opportunities in experience-based education marketing [10] [11]. Through virtual reality tours, prospective students can experience visiting campus facilities, simulator rooms, and learning environments immersively without having to be physically present [12]. This technology is considered capable of improving the perception of institutional quality and creating an initial experience that is close to real conditions [13]. However, the use of VR as a marketing tool in aviation schools, especially in West Java, is still relatively limited and has not been empirically studied much.

Based on this description, this study focuses on

analyzing the role of experience marketing strategies through social media content and virtual reality tours in attracting Generation Z's interest in aviation schools in West Java. This study aims to analyze the influence of experience-based social media content and virtual reality tours on Generation Z's interest in enrolling, as well as to examine the role of brand experience as a mediating variable. The results of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of experience-based educational marketing studies, as well as practically to the development of aviation school marketing strategies in supporting human resource development and regional competitiveness in West Java.

2. Research Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design [14], which aims to explain the causal relationship between experience marketing strategies, brand experience, and Generation Z's interest in aviation schools in West Java. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for testing the influence between latent variables measured through observable indicators. The research data consists of primary data collected through surveys using structured questionnaires. The questionnaires were compiled based on the constructs of experience marketing, social media content, virtual reality tours, brand experience, and enrollment interest, which were adapted from previous studies and tailored to the context of aviation education. All statement items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The research was conducted from January to March 2025 in the West Java region. The research population was Generation Z who had an interest in aviation education. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling with the following respondent criteria: (1) within the Generation Z age range, (2) residing in West Java, and (3) having an interest in aviation schools or education programs. Based on these criteria, 215 eligible respondents were obtained and analyzed further. The independent variable in this study is the experience marketing strategy, which is operationalized through two main dimensions, namely experience-based social media content and virtual reality tours. The mediating variable is brand experience, while the dependent variable is Generation Z's interest in enrolling in flight school. The operational definitions of each variable are tailored to the context of educational marketing and the characteristics of Generation Z.

Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS software. The PLS-SEM method was chosen because it can handle complex research models with a relatively limited number of samples and does not require normally distributed data. The analysis stages included evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) to test the validity and reliability of the construct, as well

as evaluation of the structural model (inner model) to test the relationships between variables and the strength of their influence.

Construct validity was tested through convergent validity and discriminant validity tests, while construct reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability [15]. Furthermore, hypothesis testing is carried out by looking at the path coefficient value, t-statistic value, and p-value through the bootstrapping procedure. Testing the mediating role of brand experience is carried out by analyzing the indirect influence of the experience marketing variable on enrollment interest.

This study was developed based on the experience marketing approach, which emphasizes the importance of consumer experience in shaping perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral interests. In the context of aviation education, the initial experience gained by prospective students through digital media is believed to play an important role in building interest in educational institutions. The conceptual model is shown in Figure 1.

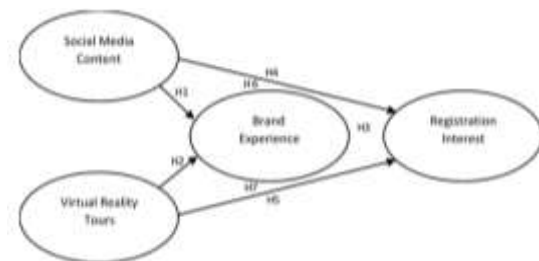


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

The experience marketing strategy in this study is represented through two main forms, namely experience-based social media content and virtual reality (VR) tours [16]. Social media content that displays authentic experiences, interactive visuals, and narratives of learning activities has the potential to create sensory and emotional experiences for Generation Z [17]. Meanwhile, virtual reality tours allow prospective students to experience an immersive exploration of aviation school facilities and environments, thereby reinforcing the impression of professionalism and quality of the institution [18]. The experiences gained through these two strategies subsequently shape the brand experience. Brand experience reflects an individual's affective, cognitive, and sensory responses to an institution, which can ultimately influence their interest in taking further action, including the decision to enroll [19]. Generation Z with positive brand experiences tend to show greater interest in institutions that provide engaging and relevant digital experiences.

Based on this framework, this study's conceptual model places experience-based social media content and virtual reality tours as independent variables, brand experience as a mediating variable, and Generation Z's interest in enrolling in flight schools as a dependent variable. This model is designed to test both the direct and indirect effects between variables in the context of

flight schools in West Java.

3. Result and Discussion

There were 215 respondents in this study, all of whom belonged to Generation Z and resided in West Java. The characteristics of the respondents were dominated by the 17-22 age group, who were in the phase of seeking information and making decisions related to higher education or vocational education. Most respondents stated that they actively used social media every day and were interested in visual and interactive content related to the world of aviation. This condition shows the relevance of using social media and virtual reality technology as a means of marketing aviation schools. Next Majority of Respondents on Table 1.

Table 1. Majority of Respondents

Respondent Characteristics	Category	Number (Person)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	118	54,9
	Female	97	45,1
Age	17-18	52	24,2
	19-20	89	41,4
	21-22	74	34,4
Latest education	Senior High School	161	74,9
	Diploma	34	15,8
	Bachelor	20	9,3
	Bandung Raya	78	36,3
Residence in West Java	Bogor-Depok-Bekasi	69	32,1
	Cirebon	38	17,7
	Others in West Java	30	13,9
Intensity of Social Media Use	Very often (every day)	147	68,4
	Often	55	25,6
	Rarely	13	6,0

Based on Table 1, the majority of respondents were male, aged 19-20 years old. Most respondents had a high school/vocational school educational background and resided in the Greater Bandung and Bogor-Depok-Bekasi areas, which are regions with a high concentration of educational institutions and digital access in West Java. In addition, most respondents stated that they used social media every day, indicating the high potential effectiveness of experience-based marketing strategies through social media and digital technology in reaching Generation Z. The measurement model was evaluated to test the validity and reliability of the research constructs, which included experience-based social media content, virtual reality tours, brand experience, and enrollment interest [20]. The validity test results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Validity Test Results

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Social Media Content	0,87	0,91	0,66
Virtual Reality Tour	0,85	0,90	0,64
Brand Experience	0,89	0,92	0,68
Registration Interest	0,88	0,91	0,65

The convergent validity test results show that all indicators have factor loadings above 0.70, thus

validating them in measuring their respective constructs. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value for all variables also exceeds the minimum limit of 0.50, indicating that the constructs are able to adequately explain the variance of the indicators. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values, all of which are above 0.70, indicate that the research constructs have a good level of reliability. Thus, the measurement model in this study is deemed feasible to proceed to the structural model evaluation stage. Structural model evaluation was conducted to examine the relationship between variables and test research hypotheses [21]. Next R-square on Table 3.

Table 3. R-square

Variabel Endogen	R-Square	Ket.
Brand Experience	0,58	Strong
Registration Interest	0,64	Strong

The coefficient of determination (R-square) value shows that brand experience can be explained by social media content and virtual reality tours by 58%. Meanwhile, Generation Z's interest in registering can be explained by social media content, virtual reality tours, and brand experience by 64%. This value shows that the research model has strong explanatory power. Hypothesis testing was conducted through path coefficient analysis using the bootstrapping procedure. The test results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Test Results

H	Hub. Variabel	Path Coeff	t-stat	p-val	Ket.
H1	KMS → BE	0,41	6,32	0,000	Accepted
H2	VR Tour → BE	0,36	5,71	0,000	Accepted
H3	KMS → RI	0,24	3,98	0,000	Accepted
H4	VR Tour → RI	0,21	3,44	0,001	Accepted
H5	BE → RI	0,39	6,85	0,000	Accepted
H6	KMS → BE → RI	0,16	4,12	0,000	Accepted
H7	VR Tour → BE → RI	0,14	3,87	0,000	Accepted

Based on Table 4, all hypotheses proposed in this study were accepted because they had t-statistic values above 1.96 and p-values less than 0.05. Experience-based social media content and virtual reality tours were proven to have a positive and significant effect on the brand experience of flight schools. These findings indicate that visual and immersive digital experiences can shape positive perceptions and impressions in the minds of Generation Z. Furthermore, both social media content and virtual reality tours also have a direct effect on Generation Z's enrollment interest. However, the greatest influence on enrollment interest is shown by the brand experience variable, indicating that brand experience plays a key role in the decision-making process.

The results of the mediation effect test show that brand experience significantly mediates the influence of social media content and virtual reality tours on enrollment interest. Thus, experience-based marketing strategies will be more effective if they are directed at building a strong brand experience before directly encouraging enrollment interest. The results of the

study show that experience-based social media content has a positive and significant effect on the brand experience of flight schools. These findings confirm that visual, narrative, and interactive content that displays the real experiences of students and learning activities can build positive perceptions in the minds of Generation Z. This is in line with the concept of experience marketing, which emphasizes emotional and sensory engagement in building brand experiences.

Furthermore, virtual reality tours have also been proven to have a significant effect on brand experience. The use of VR provides an immersive experience that allows prospective students to experience the aviation school environment more realistically. In the context of West Java, this finding is important because VR can reach prospective students from various regions without distance limitations, thereby supporting equal access to aviation education information.

The direct influence of social media content and virtual reality tours on Generation Z's enrollment interest also shows significant results. However, the larger path coefficient value in the relationship between brand experience and enrollment interest indicates that brand experience plays a central role in the process of forming interest. In other words, experience-based marketing strategies will be more effective if they are able to build a strong brand experience first.

The mediation test results confirm that brand experience mediates the influence of social media content and virtual reality tours on enrollment interest. This finding reinforces the view that Generation Z considers not only factual information but also the quality of the digital experience they have before making a decision. Practically, these findings provide strategic implications for aviation schools in West Java to integrate social media and VR as part of a sustainable experience-based marketing strategy.

4. Conclusion

This study aims to analyze the role of experience-based marketing strategies in attracting Generation Z's interest in aviation schools in West Java, with a focus on social media content and the use of virtual reality tours. Based on the results of data analysis using PLS-SEM, it can be concluded that experience-based social media content and virtual reality tours have a positive and significant effect on the brand experience of aviation schools. In addition, both marketing strategies are also proven to have a direct effect on Generation Z's interest in enrolling in flight schools. However, brand experience plays a more dominant role in shaping enrollment interest than the direct influence of digital marketing strategies. The mediation test results show that brand experience significantly mediates the relationship between social media content and virtual reality tours with Generation Z's enrollment interest. Overall, the findings of this study confirm that the success of marketing strategies for flight schools in West Java is largely determined by the institution's ability to create meaningful, immersive digital

experiences that are relevant to the characteristics of Generation Z. The experience marketing approach has proven to be effective in increasing the attractiveness of flight education institutions while strengthening their competitiveness amid increasingly fierce competition.

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