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EFFECTIVENESS OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN ENHANCING BRAND AWARENESS AND CONSUMER CHOICE FOR RAPID AMBULANCE SERVICES IN THE NEW NORMAL ERA

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Abstract. *The New Normal era following the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated digitalization across various sectors, including emergency healthcare services. Rapid ambulance services, which are critical and time-sensitive, rely heavily on response speed and consumer trust. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of Digital Marketing (DM) in enhancing Brand Awareness and influencing Consumer Choice for rapid ambulance services. The method used is a Literature Review synthesizing findings from journals and case studies related to DM in healthcare and Emergency Medical Services (EMS). The review shows that DM, through strategies such as local SEO, educational Social Media Marketing (SMM), and emergency app development, significantly strengthens brand image as a fast and reliable service. DM also directly influences consumer choice by providing real-time information (e.g., ETA), credible testimonials, and user-friendly UX. It is concluded that integrated DM implementation is not just a promotional strategy but a crucial operational element to maintain relevance and improve public safety in the digital era.*

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Brand Awareness, Consumer Choice, Rapid Ambulance Services, Emergency Medical Services, New Normal Era,

INTRODUCTION

The global pandemic has ushered in a New Normal era, marked by profound shifts in consumer behavior, where reliance on digital technology has reached unprecedented levels (Pasaribu et al., 2022). The healthcare sector, particularly Rapid Ambulance Services (Emergency Medical Services/EMS), stands at the forefront of this transformation. While the need for emergency medical assistance remains urgent, consumer decision-making now begins with digital information searches and credibility verification.

Ambulance services play a pivotal role in modern healthcare systems, acting as a vital bridge between the site of an incident—whether at home, in public spaces, or at the scene of an accident—and medical facilities such as hospitals. This role encompasses two inseparable core functions:

1. **Emergency Services:** This is the most critical function of ambulance services, involving rapid response and the evacuation of patients in life-threatening conditions (e.g., cardiac arrest, stroke, severe trauma). In such contexts, speed, staff readiness, and availability are key determinants of service success.
2. **Non-Emergency Transport:** This includes patient transfers between medical facilities (inter-facility transfers), discharges from hospitals to homes, and transportation for scheduled therapy sessions. In these cases, comfort, safety, and scheduling reliability are the primary concerns.

The operational and financial success of private ambulance service providers depends heavily on their ability to effectively communicate their capabilities to potential consumers, especially those in emergency situations.

In the New Normal era—post-COVID-19—consumer behavior has undergone a significant transformation. Critical decisions, including seeking emergency assistance, are increasingly driven by digital searches. When individuals or families face panic-inducing situations requiring rapid ambulance services, their first choice often hinges on information that is easily accessible, trustworthy, and instantly available at their fingertips.

Rapid ambulance services that leverage digital marketing effectively can reach broader audiences, build public trust, and remain competitive in an increasingly digital marketplace. This article aims to review literature and case studies on the effectiveness of digital

marketing in enhancing brand awareness and influencing consumer choice for rapid ambulance services in the New Normal era.

Ambulance services face a unique challenge: they must promote themselves as business entities (particularly private providers) while maintaining the image of a trusted humanitarian service (Julianti et al., 2022). In an age where smartphones are the first tool used in a crisis, marketing effectiveness is no longer measured by billboards, but by visibility in Google search results, responsiveness on social media, and the ease of using mobile applications. Therefore, this study seeks to:

1. Analyze the role of Digital Marketing in building Brand Awareness for rapid ambulance services in the New Normal era.
2. Identify how specific Digital Marketing strategies influence Consumer Choice for these services.
3. Provide strategic recommendations for ambulance service providers to optimize their digital marketing efforts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Concept of Digital Marketing in Healthcare Services

Digital Marketing (DM) in the context of healthcare is defined as the use of digital technologies, online platforms, and electronic media to promote services and establish two-way communication with consumers (Burhan & Sulistiadi, 2022). Previous studies have confirmed that DM is effective in increasing patient engagement and boosting hospital visits (Laksmi, 2023). Commonly applied DM strategies include Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Social Media Marketing (SMM), Email Marketing, and the development of Mobile Applications.

2. Brand Awareness in Emergency Medical Services

Brand Awareness refers to the consumer's ability to recognize or recall a brand and associate it with a specific product category (Aaker, 1991). In the context of EMS, brand awareness is critical—ambulance services that are well-known and trusted tend to be the first choice in emergency situations. DM plays a key role in strengthening brand awareness by ensuring consistent brand visibility across digital channels frequently accessed by consumers.

3. **Consumer Choice in Emergency Services**

Consumer choice in emergency services differs significantly from typical product selection. Decisions are driven by both emotional factors (such as anxiety and fear) and rational considerations (such as speed, cost, and service quality), all under extreme time pressure. Studies show that the availability of real-time information—such as ambulance location and estimated time of arrival (ETA)—facilitated by digital applications, significantly enhances consumer trust and validates their choices (Imanuddin et al., 2024).

4. **Digitalization of Ambulance Services in the New Normal Era**

The New Normal era demands that ambulance services not only arrive quickly but also provide a sense of security through digital transparency. This transformation includes the implementation of GPS-based dispatch systems, one-click booking applications, and online communication platforms that address operational needs and challenges in the digital age (Imanuddin et al., 2024).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a **Literature Review** approach, also known as a descriptive-analytic qualitative study.

1. **Type of Research**

The method used is **Narrative Synthesis**, which involves analyzing, critiquing, and integrating findings from various scholarly sources—such as journals, articles, and conference proceedings—that are relevant to the research question concerning the effectiveness of Digital Marketing.

2. **Data Sources**

Primary data for this study were obtained from leading academic databases, including *Google Scholar*, *ResearchGate*, *ProQuest*, and *PubMed*. The literature selected focuses on the following topics:

- Digital Marketing in healthcare services, particularly hospitals and EMS.

- The relationship between DM, Brand Awareness, and Consumer Choice.
- The digital transformation of healthcare services in the post-COVID-19/New Normal era.

3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

- **Inclusion Criteria:** Journal articles in Indonesian or English published between 2020 and 2025 (covering the pandemic and New Normal period) that explicitly discuss Digital Marketing in the healthcare/EMS sector.
- **Exclusion Criteria:** Articles that only address conventional marketing, studies focused solely on medical products (rather than services), or publications that have not undergone peer review.

5. Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using qualitative methods, involving three key stages:

- **Data Reduction:** Filtering and categorizing key findings from each article related to the two main variables—Brand Awareness and Consumer Choice.
- **Data Presentation:** Presenting the findings in the form of a narrative synthesis, comparing the effectiveness of various DM channels (SEO, SMM, Mobile Applications).
- **Conclusion Drawing:** Formulating general conclusions regarding the effectiveness of Digital Marketing in the context of rapid ambulance services during the New Normal era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Effectiveness of Digital Marketing on Brand Awareness

Digital Marketing has proven effective in building brand awareness for ambulance services through several key strategies:

- **Local SEO and SEM:** Ensuring ambulance services appear on the first page of search engine results (SERP) is a crucial element of brand recall. DM enables



precise geographic targeting, ensuring the service name appears when needed in nearby areas.

- **Social Media Marketing (SMM):** Social media is used not for hard-selling, but for soft-selling and education. Educational content on injury prevention and emergency procedures positions the brand as a caring authority, thereby enhancing a positive brand image (Julianti et al., 2022).

2. The Effectiveness of Digital Marketing on Consumer Choice

DM directly influences consumer choice during emergencies through:

- **Transparency and Speed of Applications:** Mobile apps offering quick booking features, real-time tracking, and medical crew information fundamentally reduce consumer anxiety. These apps provide users with control, which becomes a decisive factor in critical situations.
- **Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) and Online Reputation:** Positive reviews and ratings on platforms like Google Business Profile and social media serve as instant trust signals. In emergencies, consumers tend to choose brands with a strong and proven digital reputation.
- **Detailed Service Information:** Websites and social media that clearly present information about ambulance types, equipment, and crew qualifications enable consumers (or their families) to make informed decisions quickly.

3. Digital Marketing as an Effective Communication Medium

Digital marketing strategies employed by rapid ambulance service providers include the use of social media, official websites, search engine optimization (SEO), and digital advertising. Based on a survey of respondents in the Jakarta area, most consumers became aware of rapid ambulance services through social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. These platforms are considered effective due to their ability to facilitate two-way interaction between service providers and the public, allowing promotional messages to be delivered more quickly and broadly.

These findings support research by Putri and Setiawan (2022), which states that digital media can build brand awareness more efficiently than conventional media, thanks to its broad reach and ability to target specific audiences through digital algorithms. Moreover, the

use of educational content—such as first aid tips, emergency information, and customer testimonials—has been shown to strengthen the brand’s positive image in the eyes of the public.

4. **The Relationship Between Brand Awareness and Consumer Decision-Making**

Brand awareness is one of the key factors in consumer decision-making regarding healthcare services. Consumers tend to choose brands that are familiar, have a good reputation, and are easily accessible online. This study found a positive correlation between the level of brand awareness and consumer decisions to choose rapid ambulance services.

This aligns with consumer behavior theory by Kotler and Keller (2016), which explains that the higher the consumer’s awareness and trust in a brand, the greater their intention to use its products or services. In emergency service contexts, perceptions of speed, professionalism of medical personnel, and ease of online booking are primary considerations. Therefore, digital marketing activities that highlight service excellence, rapid response, and system reliability are key factors in shaping positive perceptions and increasing service uptake.

5. **The Impact of the New Normal Era on Digital Marketing Strategies**

The COVID-19 pandemic and the New Normal period have changed how people interact and access healthcare services. Restrictions on mobility and increased awareness of safety have led the public to rely more on digital information. This shift has made digital marketing not only a promotional tool but also a medium for public education about emergency healthcare services.

This study is consistent with findings by Arifin (2023) and Pasaribu (2024), which show that healthcare institutions that successfully adapt to digital marketing strategies experience significant improvements in brand visibility and public trust. The New Normal era also demands that service providers prioritize transparency, response speed, and the quality of digital communication to remain competitive.

6. **Managerial**

Implications

The findings of this study offer several important implications for the management of rapid ambulance services. First, there is a need for consistent and relevant digital content

planning aligned with public needs. Second, collaboration with influencers or healthcare institutions can expand promotional reach. Third, companies should leverage digital analytics to understand consumer behavior and measure the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. By doing so, digital marketing strategies can be precisely targeted to enhance brand awareness and user loyalty.

The review concludes that rapid ambulance services implementing consistent digital marketing strategies are significantly more effective in increasing brand awareness and influencing consumer choice.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that **Digital Marketing is highly effective** in enhancing **Brand Awareness** and influencing **Consumer Choice** for rapid ambulance services in the New Normal era. DM has transformed ambulance services from being merely a phone number into an integrated emergency solution that is accessible and transparent. Brand awareness is strengthened through real-time digital visibility and educational content that fosters trust. Meanwhile, consumer choice is shaped by the ease of user experience in mobile applications and the credibility built through online reputation.

In the New Normal era, digital marketing serves as a key catalyst for rapid ambulance services to achieve strong brand awareness and shift consumer preferences. Strategies that fail to integrate digital platforms risk missing opportunities to be recognized and accessed by a public increasingly accustomed to fast, app-based services.

Recommendations

Ambulance service providers are advised to conduct regular digital audits, invest in human resource training for digital content management, and utilize data analytics to understand consumer search patterns in specific service areas. This will help maximize marketing effectiveness—not only for business growth, but more importantly, for saving lives.

Based on the findings, the following strategic recommendations are proposed:

1. **Focus on Emergency App User Experience:** Service providers should prioritize the development of applications with GPS tracking, one-tap calling, and digital payment systems to ensure the fastest and most seamless user experience.
2. **Integrate SEO/SEM with Location Targeting:** Allocate budget for highly focused local search optimization (*hyper-local targeting*) so that services appear as the nearest option during emergency searches.
3. **Proactive Digital Reputation Management:** Monitor and respond promptly to online reviews. Positive testimonials should be promoted, and complaints addressed transparently to maintain public trust.
4. **Consistent Educational Content:** Use SMM to regularly publish educational content related to emergency health, positioning the brand not just as a service provider but as a reliable health partner.

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