

Marketing Strategy for the Image of Private Educational Institutions in Increasing Student Interest

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the image marketing strategy of private educational institutions in increasing student interest at SD Labschool Unesa. In the era of globalization and intense competition, educational institutions are required to implement effective marketing strategies to attract the interest of prospective students and maintain a positive image in the eyes of the public. The research method used is qualitative with a case study approach. Data was obtained through in-depth interviews, observation and documentation. The research results show that SD Labschool Unesa uses various marketing strategies, including the use of social media, community-based promotional activities, and improving the quality of educational services. The implementation of these strategies has succeeded in increasing the interest of new students, as well as strengthening the positive image of the institution among parents and the community. This research provides recommendations for other private educational institutions to optimize their marketing strategies in order to increase attractiveness and public trust.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing of educational services is needed by educational institutions to increase student interest (Sumarni et al, 2022). This is a demand that must be met in an increasingly competitive era. Marketing educational services is a medium for promoting the vision and mission and superior achievements of educational services. (Margareta et al., 2018) stated that the right marketing strategy can increase the interest of learners or students. A school is an educational institution, where marketing aims to maximize positive knowledge transfer activities in order to maximize the positive impact on society (Hax, 2010). One strategy that can be used by schools to introduce their vision and mission is marketing strategy.

A marketing strategy is an activity plan or effort to deliver goods or services from producers to consumers and an effort to realize a satisfactory exchange through distribution activities, as well as an

effort to adapt to external environmental conditions (Wijaya, 2012). Education marketing strategy is a strategy carried out by leaders, consisting of practical steps in marketing educational services by providing information to the public with the aim of convincing educational service users to use the educational services they provide (Dian et al, 2020).

Marketing strategy greatly influences the success of marketing educational institution services (Sumarni et al, 2022). Appropriate marketing strategies and appropriate promotions will be able to increase the interest of students who register, especially if educational institutions provide good educational services, educational facilities that suit the wishes and expectations of their students' interests (Af'idah & Kurniawan, 2020). Schools that are popular with customers and have quality human resources will continue to exist and be able to improve the quality of education (Manurung & Siagian, 2021; Margareta et al., 2018). Marketing strategies for educational services need to use management functions with four stages, planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating to be able to improve the quality of education (Dian et al., 2020). Educational marketing in improving the image of schools is carried out using several strategies, direct strategies, indirect strategies, differentiation strategies, and financing strategies (Fradito, et al., 2020).

Regarding the demands faced by the school, one of the efforts that can be made by related parties is to develop a school marketing strategy. The right school marketing strategy is a customer-centered strategy (including students). Customer interest is an interest and willingness to connect with something outside of themselves (Siagian, 2013; Octavany, Wardani, & Prasetyo, 2018). The interest of school customers can be shown by their willingness to register themselves/their children as prospective students, recommend the school to relatives/others, involve themselves in school activities including school marketing, and/or volunteer as school donors.

Due to the vital role of educational institutions in competing with other institutions, of course public relations is needed to form a good image and realize the vision and mission of educational institutions as well as for promotion (Qholik, 2024). The role of Public Relations in educational institutions is generally still underestimated, quite a few educational institutions neglect their role, such as being burdened with institutional administrative tasks, delivering invitations, serving guests and sometimes only as a complement to the institutional organizational structure (Pramungkas, 2020).

Public relations or public relations in educational institutions can help maintain the image of a company or educational institution (Al-Muqsith, 2024). However, unfortunately at present the role of public relations in the world of education has not been functioned optimally by educational institutions (Sandyakala, 2020). The image of an institution is one of the assets of high value for any institution (Rezeki, 2021). Because image is the public's perspective or perception of the institution. The good or bad image of an institution is determined by the institution itself (Lidan, et al., 2024).

Unesa Labschool is an educational institution in which there are primary and secondary school levels where institutional management is under the Unesa Dharma Wanita Association (DWP) Foundation and is managed under the leadership of a Head of the Unesa Labschool Institution. Over the last few years, the number of students at SD Labschool UNESA 2 has fluctuated. Factors that influence this increase or decrease include the quality of education offered, school facilities, and growing reputation in the community. An increase in the number of students usually occurs when the school succeeds in showing good academic performance, provides complete educational facilities, and establishes good communication with parents and the surrounding community. On the other hand, a decrease in the number of students can occur if there are internal problems such as a decline in the quality of education, inadequate facilities, or the emergence of competition from other schools in the vicinity.

Competition between private schools around the UNESA Labschool is quite tight. Several private schools offer similar educational programs with various advantages. Factors that are taken into consideration by parents in choosing a school include academic quality, school facilities, education costs, curriculum, extracurricular activities, and recommendations and testimonials from parents and alumni. SD Labschool UNESA 2 has achieved various achievements at local, national and international levels. Some of the achievements he has achieved include winning in science, mathematics and language

olympiads at city and provincial levels. Achievements in sports, arts and other extracurricular activities. Award for innovation in learning methods and school programs. These achievements not only raise the school's good name, but also increase public confidence in the quality of education provided by SD Labschool UNESA.

Other marketing strategies such as those based on social media, using social media as a promotional tool in marketing the school is also an easier advantage, prioritizing the characteristics of the institution can also be a special attraction in marketing the school (Nurmalasari & Masitoh, 2020). This research was conducted to determine the marketing strategy used by SD Labschool Unesa 1 and SD Labschool Unesa 2 in increasing student interest and the image of Labschool Unesa as one of the educational institutions that exist in the city of Surabaya, especially the strategy model used, the obstacles encountered faced and evaluated by the school for future improvements. Based on this description, the author is interested in conducting research with the title Image Marketing Strategy for Private Educational Institutions in Increasing Student Interest at SD Labschool Unesa 2.

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach. The research was conducted at SD Labschool Unesa. Informants in this research include the Principal, Deputy Principal, Teachers or Education Personnel and Education Personnel, as well as students, alumni and parents or guardians of students. Subjects in the form of objects in this research are books, guidelines, rules, decisions, and written data or other instruments that can be valid sources of information in research. Researchers used two types of data in this research, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained by researchers directly in the research setting, namely through direct contact with interviews or field observations. Secondary data is data obtained by researchers during the process of observing, observing and making conclusions from the results of the observations and observations made.

The methods used in collecting data in this research were observation, interviews and document study. The data analysis used by researchers is descriptive qualitative with an interactive analysis model referring to Miles Huberman and Saldana with the following steps: data collection, data condensation, data presentation, drawing or verifying conclusions. In determining the validity of the data, an inspection technique is required. The implementation of the inspection technique is based on certain criteria. According to Moleong, there are four criteria used, namely the redibility, dependability, transferability *and* confirmability.

1. Credibilit

To obtain the degree of credibility of the data, researchers refer to the recommendations of Lincoln and Guba (2001) which provide seven techniques for achieving the degree of credibility of the data, namely: (1) extending the observation period, (2) continuous observation, (3) triangulation, (4) discussing with colleagues, (5) analyzing negative cases, (6) using reference material, and (7) conducting member checks.

Of these seven things, researchers used 4 techniques to check the validity of the data, namely:

a. Continuous observation and extending the observation period

This continuous observation was carried out by researchers at the same time as extending the observation period to better understand the facts in the field. This was done by researchers in conjunction with the data collection process through interviews and direct observation of the Unesa LabSchool Elementary School environment.

b. Triangulation

Triangulation includes four things, namely: (1) method triangulation, (2) inter-researcher triangulation (if research is conducted with groups), (3) data source triangulation, and (4) theory triangulation. In this case the researcher used 2 triangulations, namely method triangulation and data source triangulation.

1). The triangulation method is carried out by comparing information or data in different ways. In qualitative research, researchers use interview, observation and documentation methods. To

obtain reliable information and a complete picture of certain information, researchers use interviews and observations or interviews with documentation to check the truth.

- 2). Data source triangulation is exploring the truth of certain information through various methods and sources of data acquisition. For example, apart from interviews and observations, researchers can use participant observation, written documents, archives, historical documents, official records, personal notes or writings and pictures or photos.

c. Peer checking

This technique is carried out through discussion with the aim that researchers can provide in-depth understanding with an open attitude and maintain honesty. The researcher conducted peer checks with several students who had the same theme as the researcher, namely about educational marketing strategies in attracting interest and the image of the institution.

d. Member check technique

According to Lincoln, quoted by Moleong, he explained the member check technique, namely by returning to the informant while showing the data that had been typed on a field note sheet that had been compiled into a presentation of the data and research findings.

e. Dependability

To avoid errors in formulating research results, the collection and interpretation of written data is consulted with various parties to participate in checking the research process carried out by researchers, so that research findings can be maintained. (dependable) and can be scientifically justified. The way to determine that the research process can be maintained is with a dependability audit by an independent auditor to review the activities carried out by the researcher.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

SD Labschool 2 Unesa is an educational institution under the Dharma Wanita foundation of Surabaya State University which is located on the Unesa Lidah Wetan Campus. In efforts to implement learning in educational institutions, students are one of the targets used in educational service marketing activities. One of the goals of marketing activities carried out by schools is to attract students in each new school year. The number of students registered at SD Labschool 2 Unesa for the 2022/2023 academic year is 240 students; In the 2023/2024 academic year there are 278 students; and for the 2024/2025 academic year there are 294 students.

Marketing Mix Strategy

Products offered

The products offered by SD Labschool 2 Unesa have been adapted to the needs and desires of educational service customers, because to determine a product, the school carries out evaluation activities and annual meetings on the school program that is being implemented. This is done periodically to improve the quality of a school, the good reputation of the school, the future prospects of the school and student graduates. To produce school programs and the service processes offered to suit the expectations of the desires and needs of prospective new students, the following school programs are offered to the community:

- a. Development of the NCP Program with initial tests, starting from grade 1, began in 2019
- b. Collaboration of national curriculum and academic materials with Pearson Education
- c. Character development through monitoring and Character Reports
- d. Final elementary school project for grade 6 students
- e. atmosphere of diversity,
- f. Total and maximum assistance for ABK students with 1 companion for 1 student facilitated by the school
- g. Interest aptitude test to support the development of non-academic skills
- h. Use of Chrome Book and LMS by the School Multimedia team
- i. Full Online Exams for each period at each class level.

- j. Development of extracurricular activities such as Broadcasting, Archery, Sling Shooting, which do not yet exist in other schools with the same class/level

Prices for attending SD Labschool 2 Unesa

Price is one of the things that SMKIT Nurul Qolbi Bekasi, which has private status, must think about when implementing a marketing mix strategy. Prices in the context of private schools are the costs that students must pay to obtain educational services. The educational costs required while attending SD Labschool 2 Unesa are categorized as affordable for student parents in the range of twelve to fourteen million rupiah. The formulation of school prices is based on deliberation to reach a consensus with the students' parents, so the school holds large meetings with parents who have been accepted as new students. The source of funds comes from the students' parents' self-help which we use to manage learning activities programs and activities outside of school, funds from foundations which are used to manage school facilities, facilities and infrastructure, and funds from the government to support student activity programs.

Promotional Activities Carried Out by SD Labschool 2 Unesa

Promotional activities are managed by a team formed by the foundation which is guided centrally by the chairman of the foundation, as well as support from educators and school employees. Full promotional activities are carried out through electronic media in the form of the school's website and online social media. The school also has a YouTube channel which is used to upload videos related to competitions that students have participated in. Other social media used by schools for marketing are the Facebook fan page which is most frequently used/active and also the one which is always active is WhatsApp. Parents of students and alumni also join the WhatsApp social media which is used by the school to maintain communication and is also used as a promotional forum for the closest friends of parents of alumni students .

Schools definitely carry out activities not only with internal parties at the school but also definitely carry out activities with parties external to the school. External parties to the school or community are an important audience for school progress, especially if it is linked to a school progress strategy, especially if it is linked to a school marketing strategy. External parties that usually have direct or indirect links with schools are the community, education observer media, government and non-governmental organizations.

Human Resources

The school principal is a school that has responsibility for the progress and decline of a school, so the principal must understand every development and need of the school as well as threats that might damage the school's marketing activities.

Teachers have duties including: recording student attendance every day, recapping student data, making daily and weekly activity plans, recording daily and weekly student grades, checking the needs and condition of the class inventory list. The process of recruiting class teachers is carried out by the school or foundation by asking family, friends, relatives or neighbors around the school environment, while the process of recruiting extra-curricular teachers is carried out by collaborating with institutions outside the school. SD Labschool Unesa pays attention to each school's human resources, because school human resources "are the parties directly involved in providing the service delivery process to educational service customers. "In paying attention to the welfare of teaching and education staff, the foundation provides basic salaries in accordance with applicable provisions and procedures."

Image of Unesa Labschool Elementary School and Student Interests

Image is an impression that arises from understanding a reality (Ibraim, et al., 2024). The image of an institution can be realized by providing understanding to the public through providing information that can be understood, makes sense and can be trusted (Rezeki, 2022). A good image is intended so that the institution can remain alive and the people within it can continue to develop creativity and

eventually have harmonious relations with the public (Muhammad, 2022). On the other hand, if the image of the institution in the public is not good, this shows dissatisfaction which can give rise to distrust, then the public will withdraw, of course this will be detrimental to the institution (Fakhruriza, 2021). The challenge of educational institutions with very tight competition from year to year is one factor in educational marketing efforts that has a positive impact on increasing the interest of users of educational services. Currently there is an interesting phenomenon where many schools are opening up early admissions to students, this is due to the high enthusiasm of the community as potential users of educational services.

SD Labschool 2 Unesa is known for its good image among alumni and parents, thus increasing the interest of users of educational services around the area. There are several reasons for parents to register their children at SD Labschool Unesa 2, including affordable costs, the existence of the National Class Program (NCP), a national curriculum program developed with full language of instruction in English, accepting inclusive students, various extracurricular activities, and support from experienced teachers who help students achieve academic and non-academic achievements.

SD Labschool Unesa has various proud achievements in the academic and non-academic fields. Some of the achievements that have been achieved include:

- a. Science Olympiad: Unesa Labschool Elementary School students often win medals in various national and regional science olympiads.
- b. Arts and Culture Competitions: This school also often wins various arts competitions, such as traditional dance, music and other creativity competitions.
- c. Sports Championships: SD Labschool Unesa has sports teams that excel in various championships, such as football, badminton and athletics.
- d. Environmental Program: This school is active in environmental programs and often receives awards in school cleanliness and greening competitions.
- e. Educational Innovation: SD Labschool Unesa is often invited to present innovative learning methods implemented in their school at educational seminars and conferences.

These achievements show SD Labschool Unesa's commitment to providing quality education and developing students' character holistically.

4. CONCLUSION

SD Labschool 2 Unesa has a strategy for marketing schools: First, to determine the target market, the school really understands every development in the environment and conditions of community needs. Second, in the midst of increasingly fierce competition, schools are implementing a competitive market positioning strategy by identifying several competing schools and providing educational services with an emphasis on character development and interest talents to support the development of non-academic skills. Third, in the marketing mix strategy, the school offers several superior program products such as extracurricular development Bro advertising, Archery, Sling Shoot, which do not yet exist in other schools with the same class/level. The marketing strategy carried out is using a mix strategy. Through the marketing strategy carried out, information was obtained that the service products offered were elementary school level education services, with educational costs of eleven to fourteen million rupiah. The service location is located at the Unesa Lidah Wetan Campus. Promotion is carried out through social media activities by a specially formed school team. The human resources empowered are male and female teachers with an age range of 25 years to 40 years. Physical evidence of marketing in the form of social media platforms, brochures and online information. The marketing process is carried out entirely through online activities by utilizing social media. Marketing activities that promote the school's image are enough to attract the interest of students' parents. Factors that influence students' interest are obtained through internal factors such as emotional desires and external factors, namely the consideration of parents who have obtained information related to the school's image which includes information on the school's vision and mission, teaching staff, school and environmental conditions, school distance, according to needs and the child's character, recognition of

the child's character needs, the costs required, and the achievements that have been achieved. The Marketing Strategy for Educational Services at Labschool Elementary School has proven to be successful and effective as evidenced by the large number of students.

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