



SCHOOL PROMOTION MANAGEMENT AND INCREASING COMMUNITY MOTIVATION TO ENROLL IN HARAPAN BANDAR PULO PRIVATE MIDDLE SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the implementation of school promotion management in increasing community motivation to enroll their children at Harapan Private Junior High School in Bandar Pulo, Langkat Regency. Using a qualitative approach, data were gathered through interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that the school applies structured and consistent promotional strategies through digital platforms and print media, directly targeting elementary students and their parents. Regular dissemination of school activities strengthens this effort. The study concludes that systematic, digital-based promotion effectively enhances public trust and enrollment interest.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's era of competition, educational institutions are very much required to get students and must produce good outputs as well. Educational services need to be carried out to attract the interest of new students. School promotion is used so that the public knows about educational institutions and knows the advantages of programs from these educational institutions. Admission of new students is one of the annual agendas carried out by each educational institution at each level and level of education. This activity was carried out ahead of the new school year to recruit new prospective students for the new school year. Junaryadi, (2022). In recruiting new prospective students, there are several efforts that can be made by schools, namely by promoting the school. Promotion is a form of communication that aims to disseminate information, influence, persuade, and increase the target market and its products to be willing to buy and accept the products offered. Thus, school promotion can be interpreted as an effort to introduce the school to prospective students or parents of prospective students with the aim of attracting their attention. Promotion is very important for educational institutions, especially private educational institutions. Mundir, (2016).

According to Laksana, promotion is a communication from sellers and buyers that comes from the right information that aims to change the attitude and behavior of buyers, who previously did not know to know so that they become buyers and still love the product. Laksana. (2019). The same is true of Philip Kotler and Armstrong in, Farida Yulianti et al, (2019) who say that promotion or marketing is a social and managerial process that makes individuals and groups get what they need and want through the creation and mutual exchange of

products and values with others. According to Rohaeni, promotion is very important in introducing products and also attracting consumers to buy the product. Because with promotions, consumers will know more about the products produced by the company. So school promotion management is a process carried out by educational institutions through various plans that have been mutually agreed upon to achieve the desired goals by utilizing existing resources and by supervising and evaluating each of its activities.

Buchari, (2019) explained that promotion is one of the determining factors for the success of a marketing program. No matter how good a graduate of an institution is, if consumers have never heard of it and are not sure that graduates of such an institution will be useful to society, then they will never enter the institution. According to Tjiptono, (2017) promotion is essentially a marketing communication, meaning marketing activities that seek to disseminate information, influence/persuade, and/or remind the target market of the company and its products to be willing to accept, buy and be loyal to the products offered by the company in question.

From some of the explanations that have been described above, the researcher can take that promotion is one of the steps of the marketing mix which in its activities communicates information related to the existence of a product or service that will be offered to potential consumers by educating, persuading, and introducing its reputation in order to attract a positive image from potential consumers so that the prospective consumer is interested in buying or using the services offered through the implementation of promotional activities. The relationship between promotional activities in the world of education, especially for school institutions in general, is almost the same as the implementation of promotional activities in the business sector, namely the same goal is to develop the reputation of an institution through the introduction of products or services offered.

It can be concluded from the above explanation that the meaning of school promotion is a way for schools to provide information, remind, and persuade the public with advertising, sales promotion, individual promotion, public relations, and direct marketing as activities to increase awareness and existence of schools to the community. Abraham Maslow (2017) in the opinion of Widayat Prihartanta put forward the theory of motivation or the theory of need that basically all humans have basic needs. He showed it in 5 levels that are pyramid-shaped, people start the push from the bottom level. The five levels of needs are known as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, ranging from basic biological needs to more complex psychological motives; which will only matter once the basic needs are met.

From the results of the researcher's initial observations, the above theories are in line with the facts at Harapan Private Junior High School Bandar Pulo which shows that the school has carried out school promotions aimed at increasing public motivation to enroll their children in the Harapan Bandar Pulo Private Junior High School, by the way the school promotes by creating extracurriculars that students need according to their times such as futsal extracurricular and volleyball extracurricular along with scout.

Competition among private educational institutions is intensifying with the digital transformation and the increasing choice of quality schools. In this context, promotional management is crucial for schools to attract prospective students and build public trust. Several studies by Mundir (2016) and Junaryadi (2022) have emphasized the importance of promotion for private schools, but most have focused on traditional approaches (brochures, in-person visits) or on large-scale urban schools. Meanwhile, recent studies on digital promotional strategies (social media, creative video content) and their impact on parental motivation in private schools in the suburbs are still limited. This is a research gap that needs to be filled. The urgency of this research is reinforced by the shift in parental behavior in seeking educational information, shifting from word-of-mouth recommendations to online searches and social media. Without a structured digital promotional strategy, private schools risk losing their competitive edge. Conversely, appropriate promotion can increase brand trust while ensuring a school's financial sustainability. Recent studies (Laksana, 2019; Yuliantie et al., 2019) state that the integration of offline and online promotions can expand audience reach by up to 60% compared to conventional methods alone, but the mechanism by which this affects the motivation of local communities has not been widely explored. In this case, the researcher has been promoting the school with the community by providing free promos such as giving free gifts to new students who enter the Harapan Bandar Pulo Private Junior High School for free registration fees, development money, attribute gartis and free tuition fees for 6 months along with being given free batik clothes. And the school also involves social media such as facebook, instagram, and tiktok by uploading PPDB (New Student Admission) videos as creatively as possible, where teachers collaborate with students in making the promotional video.

The research gap arises from the limited number of studies that in-depth explore how digital-based promotional management particularly through social media such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube influences public motivation to choose private schools in semi-urban and rural areas. Most previous studies have focused on schools in urban areas and have not examined the simultaneous integration of digital and conventional

promotional strategies. However, according to Yulianti et al. (2019), the combination of online and offline promotions can increase audience reach by up to 60% compared to conventional promotions alone.

However, the mechanisms by which these strategies influence public motivation, especially in the local context, remain largely unstudied. The urgency of this research is increasingly relevant given the increasing number of private schools and the public's preference for educational institutions that openly demonstrate their excellence and identity. Without structured and adaptive promotion strategies, private schools could potentially lose their competitive edge. Conversely, with well-managed promotions, schools can not only maintain stable student numbers but also strengthen public trust and the institutional image. Based on initial observations, Harapan Bandar Pulo Private Junior High School in Batang Serangan District, Langkat Regency, is one of the schools that has successfully maintained and even increased its student enrollment year after year. This school combines conventional promotions (brochures and elementary school visits) with a digital approach based on social media, offering various incentives such as free registration fees, free supplies, and a six-month tuition reduction. Creative promotional videos involving teachers and students are also regularly published on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. The success of Harapan Bandar Pulo Private Junior High School in attracting community interest demonstrates the importance of systematic, digital-based promotional management in the local context. Therefore, this study aims to examine in depth how the school's promotional management is implemented by the school to increase community motivation to enroll their children. This research is expected to fill a gap in the literature and provide a practical contribution to the development of promotional strategies for private schools in similar areas.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a descriptive analysis approach that aims to understand and describe in depth how school promotion management is implemented in increasing community motivation to send their children to Harapan Bandar Pulo Private Middle School, Batang Serangan District, Langkat Regency. Data were collected through several techniques, namely, In-depth interviews: Conducted with the principal, vice principal for student affairs and public relations, teachers involved in promotions, and parents of students who have just registered their children. Focus Group Discussion (FGD): Involving groups of teachers and students who play a role in the school's digital promotional activities, such as creating social media content. Direct observation: Conducted on promotional activities in the field, such as distributing brochures, visiting elementary schools, and creating social media content in the school environment. Documentation: Collecting data in the form of promotional archives (posters, banners, PPDB videos), activity photos, data on the number of applicants per year, and school social media engagement statistics.

The research process was carried out through several stages, including problem formulation and research objectives based on initial phenomena and observations. Primary data collection through interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), as well as secondary data from school documentation. Data reduction, classification, and organization were carried out to facilitate the analysis process. Qualitative data analysis used a thematic analysis approach, which included coding, categorization, and identification of key themes related to promotional strategies and their impact on community motivation. Interpretation of the meaning of the findings was carried out through triangulation with educational promotion management theory. The report was prepared in a flexible narrative format in accordance with the characteristics of qualitative research (Moleong, 2019). To improve the validity and reliability of the data, this study applied source triangulation, comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. Member checking involved confirming the interview results with respondents to ensure data accuracy. Peer debriefing involved consulting with the supervisor and colleagues to check the consistency of the analysis results. With this approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive, in-depth, and valid picture of school promotion management practices in the context of private education in rural areas.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

School Promotion Management in Increasing Community Motivation to Enroll Their Children in Private Junior High School Harapan Bandar Pulo, Batang Serangan District, Langkat Regency

The promotion of education is one that will depend greatly on the problem of education that is an art, because the discussion of education will never be discussed by anyone, because education is one of the solutions to face problems that often arise every day, even every second. Education itself when viewed from the point of view of its understanding has many differences among scholars, scientists and even among the general public, but in essence education itself aims to mature humans and humanize humans consciously and plannedly. Arfani, Lai, (2018). Education guides all the natural forces that exist in children so that they as individual beings and social beings can achieve the highest happiness and safety. According to Ki Hajar Dewantara in Binti Maunah,

(2009). The essence of education is a conscious effort made by the family, community and government through guidance, teaching and training activities that take place inside or outside school throughout life, to carry out their role in various environmental issues appropriately in the future.

Moreover, in a competitive era like this, it is very difficult if we do not have the ability to change ourselves quickly and be able to evolve in line with various stakeholder demands. This condition applies to almost all organizations that are profit and non-profit. This also applies in the world of education, although educational institutions are not profit institutions, but their management cannot be done traditionally but requires special abilities so that educational output has high competitiveness to be able to compete at the global level. Maskub Abrori, (2015), So that when the paradigm in looking at education begins to shift, which was initially seen and studied from the social aspect, now people see education more as a corporate. That is, viewing education as a production organization that produces educational marketing that can be easily accessed by consumers. If producers are unable to market their production, then the production offered will not sell. Abdillah Mundir, (2015)

However, promotion must be accompanied by supervision, review and evaluation of previous sales promotion programs. The results of the supervision and evaluation are a reference for the institution's promotion team in developing school promotion strategies, especially in determining strategic locations for promotion areas. Supervision of sales promotion activities is taken by the institution's leaders by making direct visits to the location of promotional activities and requesting activity reports from the institution's promotion team. Supervision is indeed one of the activities that should not be ignored in order to measure the results of sales promotion activities. In connection with the opinions expressed by education promotion management experts, it is a process carried out by educational institutions through various plans that have been mutually agreed upon to achieve the desired goals by utilizing existing resources and by supervising and evaluating each of its activities.

The promotion carried out by Harapan Bandar Pulo Private Junior High School, Batang Serangan District, Langkat Regency, is a direct promotion to partner elementary schools. The school team visited 12 public and private elementary schools in Batang Serangan district. Interactive presentations in grade VI accompanied by the distribution of brochures and extracurricular club demonstrations increase students' curiosity. Scheduled digital content. In the last six months, the school's Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube accounts posted 72 uploads (an average of 3 posts/week). The format includes a short video "a day at SMP HBP", alumni testimonials, and live broadcasts of science competition activities, print and outdoor media. The installation of 18 banners on the main road to the surrounding villages and the distribution of 1 500 brochures through village cooperatives expanded the reach to parents who were not yet active on social media. "Open House" program and scholarships. Twice open houses (February & April 2025) were packed with science lab demos and digital classroom simulations. Applicants for merit scholarships increased from 14 people (2024) to 39 people (2025).

The characteristics of educational marketing that distinguish it from conventional marketing lie in the nature of educational products that are intangible, inseparable, variable, and perishable. Intangible properties refer to the fact that education cannot be physically seen, palpated, or felt before consumption. The inseparable nature suggests that the production and consumption of educational services occur simultaneously, where the quality of education is highly dependent on direct interaction between educators and learners. The variable nature indicates that the quality of educational services can vary depending on who provides, when, where, and how those services are delivered. While perishable properties indicate that educational services cannot be stored for future consumption. The evolution of the concept of educational marketing has undergone several stages of development. In the early stages, education marketing focuses more on production orientation, where educational institutions emphasize more on internal efficiency and academic quality without paying too much attention to market needs and desires. The second stage is sales orientation, where educational institutions begin to actively conduct promotions and sales to attract more students. The third stage is market orientation, where educational institutions begin to conduct market research to understand the needs and desires of the target market, then develop programs and services in accordance with the findings of the research. The current stage is the societal marketing orientation, where educational institutions consider not only customer satisfaction and organizational profits, but also the long-term interests of society and the environment. Marketing is a familiar word to the ears of our people, but the word marketing is better known in the business or industrial world. However, the word marketing has been widely adopted to the world of education or non-profit oriented whose orientation is in the form of providing services rather than goods. Marketing comes from the English language, namely marketing. Marketing not only provides products but also services. Marketing is called the marketing function because it has various activities such as selling, buying in all sorts of ways, transporting goods, storing, sorting, and so on. Hearing the word marketing or marketing, our minds go straight to which business to find and make a profit. This is very natural because the word "marketing" often appears and develops among businesses,

both manufacturing businesses and service businesses. To clarify the effectiveness of school promotion management from year to year, the following is a data visualization in the form of tables and graphs that illustrate the increase in key indicators:

Table 1 Changes in Public Interest and Motivation

Indicators	2023/2024	2024/2025	(%)
Phase I registrants	87	128	47 %
Final Registrant	64	102	59 %
Parents-get to know the school via social media	32 %	58 %	26 %
Parents-cite "facilities & transparency" as the reason for choosing	24 %	49 %	25 %

The table above shows a significant increase in various indicators of the effectiveness of the promotion management of the Harapan Bandar Pulo Private Junior High School between the 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 school years. First, the number of phase I registrants has increased from 87 people in the 2023/2024 school year to 128 people in the 2024/2025 school year, or an increase of 47%. This increase shows that the school's initial promotion strategy began to attract wider public interest from the early stages of enrollment. Second, the number of final registrants, namely students who actually registered and were accepted, also experienced a significant spike, from 64 students to 102 students, or an increase of 59%. This shows that not only is initial interest increasing, but also the conversion rate from prospective applicants to active students. Third, the percentage of parents who know the school through social media increased from 32% to 58%, or an increase of 26 percentage points (pp). This confirms that social media is a very effective promotional channel and reaches more people than the previous year.

Finally, the percentage of parents who cited "facilities and transparency" as the main reason for choosing a school increased from 24% to 49%, or an increase of 25 pp. This shows that content-based promotion strategies (such as uploading student activities and school facilities on social media) are successful in shaping the public's positive perception of the quality and openness of schools. Overall, this data shows the success of promotion management in increasing the visibility of schools and building public trust which directly impacts the increase in the number of new students. Promotion is one of the important elements in the marketing mix which functions as a means of communication between service providers and their consumers. These findings demonstrate the success of well-planned, digital-based promotional management. Based on Kotler and Keller's (2016) marketing mix theory, promotion is a key element in building awareness and shaping positive perceptions of the services offered. In the educational context, promotion has distinctive characteristics as part of educational service marketing: it is intangible, inseparable, variable, and perishable. Schools not only sell services but also trust and hope. Therefore, a successful promotional strategy requires more than traditional approaches like brochures and banners; it requires a digital approach that conveys the school's values through visualizations of activities, testimonials, and interactive content. Swastha and Irawan (2016) explained that promotion is a one-way flow of information or persuasion that is made to direct a person or organization to actions that create exchange in marketing. In this case, promotion aims to form public awareness and interest in choosing a product or service in this context an educational service.

The main purpose of school promotion is to increase public awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the quality of education provided by the school, so as to increase public trust and support for the school. These goals are multidimensional and include both short-term and long-term aspects. In the short term, school promotion aims to increase the number of enrollees, increase the school's brand awareness, and build a positive image in the eyes of the public. Meanwhile, in the long run, school promotion aims to build a strong reputation, create community loyalty, and become the top choice school for the community. The first specific goal is to increase the accessibility of educational information to the public. Through planned and systematic promotional activities, schools can convey complete and accurate information about the educational programs offered, available facilities, achievements that have been achieved, and various other advantages. This is very important to help the community, especially parents and prospective students, in making the right educational decisions. Information that is easily accessible and understood will reduce the information gap between schools and the community, thereby increasing public participation in education. The second goal is to build trust and credibility of the school in the eyes of the public. Trust is a very valuable intangible asset for schools, because education is a long-term investment that requires a significant commitment of time, effort, and cost. Through transparent and consistent promotion, schools can demonstrate their commitment to quality education, public accountability, and excellent service to students. The trust built will be a strong foundation for a long-term relationship between the school and the community. The third goal is to create differentiation and a competitive advantage of the school

compared to other schools. In an era of increasingly fierce competition, schools must be able to show the uniqueness and added value that can be given to students. School promotion plays an important role in communicating a unique value proposition, excellent program, innovative learning method, or specific achievements that set the school apart from competitors. Clear differentiation will help the community in understanding the position and advantages of schools among the available options.

The results of the above study show that schools implement a full management cycle: planning a content calendar, implementing multi-channel promotions, and then monitoring performance through *weekly insights*. This is in line with Usman's (2014) management definition which emphasizes P3. The harvest storage strategy proposed by the Prophet Joseph is analogous to "storing" digital content assets—videos, photos, testimonials—which are then published on a scheduled basis to maintain a supply of promotional messages; This step reflects long-term planning and control of content consumption. The finding that 58% of parents know about schools through social media confirms the *intangible character* of educational services: the quality is "felt" through visual stories, not just buildings (Kotler & Keller 2016). Authentic content about learning activities builds trust and reduces *perceived parental risk*. Schools move from *sales orientation* (banners & brochures) to *market orientation* (survey of interest of elementary school partners) and even *societal orientation*, for example, highlighting digital literacy programs for rural communities.

This shift is consistent with the evolution of the concept of education marketing described by Arfani (2018). The supporting factors for the visionary leadership of school principals, digitally literate young human resources, active alumni networks as *brand ambassadors* and inhibiting factors are limited internet bandwidth (peak hours), limited banner printing budget, and the absence of an integrated analytics dashboard to monitor campaign effectiveness. Planned promotion management, incorporating a digitalhumanist approach, and supported by visionary leadership significantly increases the motivation of the community to enroll their children in Harapan Bandar Pulo Private Junior High School. Parental involvement through social media transparency is the key to trust, while the differentiation of superior programs strengthens the competitive position of schools in the Batang Serangan area. The implementation of structured and integrated promotional management through social media, in-person visits to elementary schools, and incentive programs has proven effective in increasing public interest and trust in Harapan Bandar Pulo Private Middle School. This strategy can serve as a model for other private schools to face the challenges of competition in the digital age with an adaptive, participatory, and socially value-oriented approach.

4. CONCLUSION

Harapan Bandar Pulo Private Junior High School successfully demonstrated the effectiveness of its P-3 cycle-based promotional management (Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring) in increasing public interest in sending their children to school. This strategy was implemented systematically, establishing clear objectives, a structured schedule, and measurable success indicators. Promotion was conducted across multiple channels through in-person visits to partner elementary schools, print media (brochures and banners), and social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, consistently broadcasting promotional content three times per week. Digital content featuring student daily life, alumni testimonials, and school activities proved effective in building parental trust and providing a virtual overview of the school's educational services. The success of this promotional strategy was also supported by adequate digital infrastructure. However, limitations persisted, such as low internet bandwidth during peak hours, a limited budget for printing promotional materials, and the lack of an integrated analytics dashboard system to monitor promotional performance in real time. Therefore, strengthening digital infrastructure—particularly improving the internet network, providing audiovisual content production equipment, and developing a digital campaign monitoring system—is a strategic necessity directly related to promotional effectiveness. These findings reinforce the concept of market-oriented and societal-oriented educational marketing, as proposed by Arfani (2018), stating that modern educational promotion no longer focuses solely on delivering information but also on building social engagement and public trust. Furthermore, these findings align with Kotler & Keller's (2016) marketing mix theory, which positions promotion as a crucial element in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions, specifically parents of prospective students. Conversely, these findings challenge traditional promotional approaches, which are one-way and less adaptable to changing digital society behaviors. Thus, a digital-humanistic promotional strategy, designed in a well-planned, adaptive manner, supported by adequate infrastructure and visionary leadership, has proven effective in increasing public motivation towards private schools. These findings provide a practical contribution to the development of educational promotion management that is more responsive to the challenges of the digital era and competition among educational institutions.

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