



**SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF
DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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Abstrak

Higher education is an organization established and managed by the community by forming a legal entity that is non-profit and is required to obtain a Material permit. The problem that is often faced by private higher education institutions is the difficulty in increasing the number of new students entering the new academic year. This problem causes higher education institutions to have difficulty developing because the largest amount of income is from the number of students. This study used a descriptive qualitative method by taking samples from several private higher education institutions by conducting interviews with several marketing staff representatives from each higher education institution. The results obtained are the mapping and analysis of social media utilization strategies according to the resource capabilities of each higher education institution with reference to the marketing mix (7P), so it can be concluded that there is still a lot of potential from higher education institutions that can be exposed more widely in order to maximize their abilities to get more prospective students.

Keywords: *Higher Education, Marketing Mix, Social Media*

A. INTRODUCTION

Higher education or also known as universities are educational institutions that are tasked with providing learning services for the community to master knowledge at a higher level. The function of higher education is to produce agents of change who are able to encourage and pioneer changes in various aspects towards a modern society by providing visionary, creative, innovative and quality-oriented education (Sihite & Saleh, 2019). Based on the Indonesian Statistics report in 2023 citing a report from (Databoks, 2023), there are currently 3,107 universities in Indonesia throughout 2022. Based on this number, there is a decrease of 0.25% compared to 2021 which recorded the number of Indonesian universities as many as 3,115 units. Of this number, 2,982 Indonesian universities last year were private universities (PTS) or equivalent to 95.97% of the total Indonesian universities in 2022 and the remaining 125 were state universities. This data also states that the provinces with the largest distribution of universities are on the island of Java with 1,477 universities and the island of Sumatra with 768 universities.

The large number of higher education institutions causes competition between universities to become increasingly tight, therefore a creative marketing strategy is needed for universities to increase the number of prospective male and female students. The phenomenon where for private universities the number of students greatly affects their operational management. In addition, the small number of students will affect the challenges in efforts to improve quality, relevance and difficulties in increasing their competitive advantage. (Hariyanti & Wirapraja, 2024).

In fact, with the increasingly developing technology, it should be able to provide a significant positive impact for universities in their efforts to get prospective students. Social media that is used optimally is an example of one of the efficient and easy-to-do digital marketing strategies. (Luvitasari & Harliantara, 2023).

The advancement of information technology also has an impact on changes in people's lives. The use of social media, both directly and indirectly, can change behavior patterns and personalities. The changes themselves include changes in culture, morals, attitudes and rules that are usually in people's lives (Harahap et al., 2021). Social media according to (Purwa, 2022) comes from two words, namely media and social where Media is interpreted as a communication tool between users, while social is the interaction of an individual with the community around him, so it can be concluded that social media is an online-based platform that focuses on the existence of users in order to facilitate their activities and collaboration. The main function of social media is to support life activities, such as sharing information, interacting, and doing promotions (Syaifudin & Darmaningtyas, 2022). Social media can also be used as a tool for audience segmentation, demographic analysis, segmentation mapping and strengthening an organization's brand strategy (Amiruddin et al., 2021). Social media in its development according to (Harahap et al., 2021) has several types as classifications, including:

- a. Collaborative projects: is a type of social media in the form of a website or application that can give permission to its users to be able to change, add, replace and or delete parts or contents in the site or application. For example, Wikipedia.
- b. Blog dan microblog: is a form of social media in the form of an application that provides flexibility to users in accessing such as providing comments, venting, or sharing their experiences through this blog. For example, providing criticism and suggestions to venting personal problems. Example of the application; Instagram.
- c. Content: is a type of social media where users can share media content such as Ebooks, videos, photos, and others. Example of the application; YouTube
- d. Social networking sites: is a type of social media that can give permission to users to stay connected through personal data that has been created and then can be connected with other users. Example of application: Facebook
- e. Virtual game world: is a type of social media application that aims to implement 3D settings, where users appear in the form of avatars that resemble the user's own personalization and are then used to communicate with other users as in the real world: An example of its application is in online games.
- f. Virtual social world: is a development of the virtual game world where users can communicate more actively and play a greater role in experiencing life in the virtual world.

Digital marketing and its relationship with social media according to (Raharjo & Rofiuddin, 2022) is where the use of social media networks as a technological facility in carrying out promotional activities and mapping digital markets. The concept of digital marketing is interactive synergy between producers, customers, and the existence of geographically different markets. The digital marketing Mix itself according to (Wirapraja et al., 2023) is:

- a. Product: are products and services offered and then marketed by organizations where these products and services can include features, product reliability, quality, brand image, product design and so on.
- b. Price: is the nominal value of currency that must be paid by customers to obtain the marketed products and services.
- c. Place: is a marketing place, in digital marketing the marketing place can be a distribution channel or application platform where the products and services are marketed, such as a website.
- d. Promotion: refers to activities carried out by companies to communicate the advantages of the products and services they have with the aim of persuading customers to be interested in making a purchase.
- e. People: is an element related to the size and quality factors of human resources in an organization. Organizations that have quality human resources have advantages in terms of performance and productivity.
- f. Process: can be interpreted as factors related to the working methods or flow of activities carried out by business actors in providing services to consumers.
- g. Physical Evidence: is a factor or element related to image, appearance or supporting evidence that can be shown by companies or business actors related to the products and services they market. The better the physical evidence that can be shown, the more it can provide the perception that there is a guarantee of quality and good benefits from the products and services.

Based on the marketing mix concept, the use of social media platforms can be used as a communication medium with customers as a company's effort to promote their products and services through new digital marketing indicators through brand associations and increasing the company's online reputation assessment. (Zein, 2023). His study will examine the effectiveness of digital marketing communication strategies using social media that can be applied to private universities in order to increase the number of new students by using a qualitative model through a case study approach.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, a qualitative descriptive approach was used, where this approach aims to determine the relationship to the situations and events being studied by describing and depicting objects based on existing facts, such as research on behavior, perception, motivation and presented in the form of words and language. (Matindas et al., 2018). In this study, the data sample collection technique used was purposive sampling, where the technique determines the sample based on certain criteria that must be met. (Fajrin, 2018).

In this study, the sample used was an informant who has a profession as a marketing staff from a university in Surabaya. The criteria for this informant are also informants who in their marketing activities utilize social media as one way to get prospective students. As for supporting data which is secondary data obtained from books, journals and literature used as a complement in discussing the results of the study.

C. RESEARCH & DISCUSSION RESULTS

Social media marketing in its utilization is used as a means of interaction between companies and target audiences to build brand image. Activities in this case include

activities such as posting interesting material on social media profiles, listening to and engaging followers, analyzing results, and implementing social media marketing. Social media can have a major impact on brand loyalty, sustainability, and commercial performance. (Harto et al., 2023).

As previously explained, marketing using social media is a direct or indirect marketing practice to build awareness, recognition, provide reminders, act through brands, product businesses, humans or other user entities through social networks such as blogs, microblogs, bookmarks, videoblogs and other content sharing applications. (Raharjo & Rofiuddin, 2022). So based on the results of interviews with informants regarding the role of social media in the digital marketing mix in marketing universities with the aim of getting prospective students. The results of the interviews obtained the results and findings and marketing strategies that have been or will be carried out by universities as follows:

- a. **Product:** products in higher education include departments, faculties, facilities, human resources including educational staff and personnel. The use of social media is carried out through the creation of content that explores the facilities owned by the university, the works of lecturers and student activities. This is in accordance with previous research conducted by (Hariyanti & Wirapraja, 2024) which states that on social media, higher education institutions need to be equipped with complete information such as faculty and department choices, price and registration information, profiles of lecturers and education staff, curriculum and learning outcomes, learning facilities, activities and contact pages.

Steps to develop strategies related to product aspects in the context of higher education are to develop content on social media not only limited to department information but also to involve alumni and graduate users in the content created. Another thing is also paying attention to content from competitors so that social media content created related to products has a different differentiation value and is also one way to expose more deeply the strength of the products we have. (Effendy, 2019).

- b. **Price:** is information about the price and value that must be paid by the customer, where this is also something that is clearly displayed on social media. This is because price is the strongest factor that determines potential customers in determining purchasing decisions. Price information on social media is a balance between supply and demand (Mulyana, 2015). Price information displayed through social media must also be studied through market research first to adjust to the capabilities of potential customers so as to create competitive value and can be compared with offers provided by competitors. (Effendy, 2019).

In the content of social media content, alternative strategies that can be done are to involve consumers in product selection, educational videos about products, or conduct online voting on products to be released next. In this content, information on the price offered can be inserted so that a sense of feasibility is formed between the product and the price offered. (Wahid, 2024).

- c. **Promotion:** The most important thing in doing promotions according to (Rianingtyas & Wardani, 2018) is to create a customer experience through promotional development by utilizing design elements. The utilization of design elements in question includes elements such as photos, icons, images, effects, interface displays, wireframes, logos and colors. The goal to be achieved from the utilization of design elements is not only to create a brand identity for the university but also to display a positive visual identity impression and a better appearance of the organization's character.

Implementation of promotions in higher education marketing efforts can also be done by implementing several things such as advertising content, increasing public communication, public relations and establishing relations with the media. (Vidyawati & Rosyidah, 2022).

- d. Place: In digital marketing, the concept of place is based on the marketing channels used. Based on the results of interviews with informants, it was found that in marketing activities, at least three social media are commonly used as communication channels, namely using TikTok, Facebook and Instagram. Based on these three channels, information about universities is carried out based on customer segments, for example on TikTok and Instagram it is aimed at prospective students, while Facebook is used to target the parents of prospective students. In the research of (Hariyanti & Wirapraja, 2024) stated that not only through social media, but universities also need to optimize their sites or websites as a representation of the identity of the university.

Using social media means being able to reach a wider market, according to research from (Wirapraja et al., 2023) mentions that the marketing place is not only always oriented to the college environment itself but can develop by targeting customer segments outside the main segment, namely communities, companies, or organizational associations that are considered still suitable for the main target market product. The diversity of social media platforms used will be a useful instrument in conducting online marketing. Utilization and maximization of digital marketing and its components will be very helpful in reaching consumers (Wahid, 2024).

- e. People: Using social media means that communication with potential consumers must be well established. Good responses and informative information delivery are the strengths of universities in showing the quality of human resources they have even though the communication is done through social media.

Marketing with the E-WOM system and direct selling to prospective students is also a form of activity to show the positive side of the representation of the quality of human resources so that it can increase the interest of prospective students in making decisions about choosing a major and universities. (Waluyo et al., 2022).

- f. Process: in the process of higher education as an effort to find new students has had cooperation with high schools and several other industry vendors, for example in higher education in the field of information technology has cooperation with information technology companies such as Microsoft, Apple, and others. The advantages that are owned must be exposed through social media as a step in carrying out the marketing process.

In research from (Masduki et al., 2023) it was also explained that in the process, universities also felt the need to approach the parents of prospective students so that they could increase emotional, instrumental and informative support, thereby strengthening the decision in choosing a university.

- g. Physical Evidence: Content on social media needs to display more facilities owned by a university, both those that support academic and non-academic activities. In research from (Arbian & Euriga, 2024) It is stated that physical elements can include logos, equipment, supporting goods, packaging and so on.

Physical evidence related to the campus environment such as student activities, implementation of UKM, event management and dynamics of the learning process can also be interesting content and published through social media, for example by utilizing vlogvideos through the YouTube channel. (Yuniarsih et al., 2022).

D. CONCLUSION

Marketing strategy planning through digital media such as social media has the potential to increase the number of student admissions in the scope of higher education. The selection of social media to be used needs to adjust the segment of the target market being targeted, for example the use of Instagram and TikTok for prospective students, the use of Facebook to provide information to parents and video blogs about campus information through the YouTube channel. The use of marketing mix in the digital era must be adjusted to the information technology platform and adjusted to consumer segmentation and targets, the social media in question must provide complete information to prospective students and parents, both campus information, curriculum, facilities, and cooperation owned by the university.

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