Forming School Branding through Social Media: Educational Innovation Post Covid-19

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Abstract

Arafah Integrated Islamic Elementary School is one of the schools affected by the Covid-19 pandemic that has passed, this has caused SDIT Arafah to experience a decrease in the number of students enrolling. This paper reveals how schools can overcome the crisis they have experienced by utilizing social media in the form of WhatsApp, Tiktok, YouTube and IG as a medium for building school image (School branding). School branding is an effort made by educational institutions in offering a brand that is unique and has its own characteristics.

Keywords: branding, innovation, post covid-19 education.

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on various sectors of life, namely the economic, health, political and educational sectors (Yamali and Putri 2020). The Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (2020) declared Circular Letter No. 4 Year. 2020 concerning the implementation of education policies during the emergency period of the spread of Covid-19. One of the contents of the policy is carrying out a learning process from home or what is commonly called BDR. The policy regarding learning from home changed many habits both in learning methods and in providing information on educational services in schools, namely what was originally manual was more about maximizing the role of technology in it. Therefore, like it or not, in the process of building a good image during the Covid-19 pandemic, schools must maximize the role of technology.

Utilization of online media for school branding efforts should be an alternative for schools in carrying out marketing in the pandemic era (Fatimah & Mahmudah, 2020). Hia et al., (2020) stated that schools must utilize technology, especially the internet in carrying out school marketing or school branding, this is due to the fact that in the future internet technology will become more sophisticated and be able to make it easier for schools to disseminate information in an interesting way and make it easier for the community to obtain this information.

One of the impacts of Covid-19 on the education sector is the change in direct (offline) learning patterns to network-based (online) thereby reducing direct interaction between students and teachers, and even burdening parents of students because they have to provide assistance while at home (Sarnoto & Manuscript, 2022). In this situation and condition which is full of new problems, education is deemed to have failed to present itself as a basic need. Interest in learning and going to school continues to experience a downward trend (Napitupulu & Munthe, 2019). The big responsibility for returning the situation and conditions to their pre-pandemic point rests with those who serve as public relations (Sarnoto et al., 2022).

Arafah Integrated Islamic Elementary School located in Sampit, Kotawaringin Timur Regency, Central Kalimantan, also felt this way. In 2019–2021, the decline in students and also the lack of public interest in registering for school became a problem they experienced after the Covid-19 pandemic. This is because many competing schools are taking advantage of promotional opportunities using social media, according to Harahap & Susri Adeni (2020) during the pandemic, internet users experienced a significant increase and the most drastic increase in users was among parents or mothers. From the statement above, to gain the trust of prospective parents, schools must be able to be literate and utilize technology so that innovation is needed so that they are not left behind by competitors.

Innovation in schools certainly implies new ideas in schools, events in schools that are programmed and patterned, as well as methods observed in the school environment. The term school innovation can contain two meanings, namely innovation in schools and innovations carried out in schools. School innovation is more likely that the innovation program is carried out by outsiders, while for innovation within the school, it means that there are innovations carried out within the school. Actors of innovation in schools can be teachers, principals, vice principals, administrative ranks, and so on. However, both of them have the same goal, namely to improve the quality of students and the quality of graduates so that they are accepted in society (Arif & Mahmudah, 2022).

Branding in the theory presented by Philip (2002) in his book explains that "the set of beliefs consumers hold about a particular brand" or can be interpreted as the beliefs that are believed by the community regarding a particular brand or in this case is a school. So if defined the meaning of school branding is an effort to increase the trust that the community has in the quality of the school itself. School branding itself does not only play a role in increasing the quantity of students, but also the quality of students. With more and more people who know and are interested in choosing the school, it is likely that applicants who have good quality to register at the school will also increase.

Previous studies on public relations and education marketing strategies after the Covid-19 pandemic have been carried out, including research on the marketing strategy of TK Negeri 2 Yogyakarta which relies on website-based promotions as its main media. However, there are many other aspects that are also prioritized when carrying out promotions, namely product, price, place, people, physical evidence, and process. The product offered is a multicultural school with a cultural perspective. The price offered is very affordable according to the needs of students.

Methods

This research approach is a qualitative type of case study. A qualitative approach was chosen in this study because the authors saw that the nature of the problems under study could develop naturally according to the conditions and situations in the field. The research location was at the Arafah Integrated Islamic Elementary School which is located on Jl. Mango 1 No. 2 Sampit, Mentawa Baru Hilir, Kec. Mentawa Baru Ketapang, Kab. East Kotawaringin Province. Central Kalimantan. This school was chosen by researchers because this school experienced a decline in students during the Covid-19 pandemic and managed to revive itself using school image innovation.

Observational data was used to find data about school branding at the Arafah Integrated Islamic Elementary School. In-depth interviews were used to find data about branding carried out at the Arafah Integrated Islamic Elementary School. Interviews were conducted with school principals, vice principals for public relations and parents of students.

Results

Ayunisa & Sholeh (2022) explain that school branding is an effort made by educational institutions in offering a brand (brand) that is unique and has its own characteristics. In this case, of course, the branding business has the aim that the educational institution/school can be seen favorably by the wider community (Winarno et al., 2020). Through these definitions and objectives, the essence of branding activities is to increase public trust in schools (Akmalia et al., 2020). This is in accordance with the branding theory presented by Philip (2002) who stated that branding has the aim of increasing public trust in certain institutions.

Along with the development of communication technology, especially in the digital era, it encourages an increase in people using social media as a medium of communication. Arafah Integrated Islamic Elementary School in creating content containing informational messages related to educational programs is designed to be content to be published via social media, in the form of WhatsApp, Tiktok, YouTube and IG. In the process of uploading the content, a hashtag symbol (#) is included in each caption. The Arafah Integrated Islamic Elementary School

Digital Marketing Staff said the function of the hashtag symbol (#) in the caption on social media is as a school identity and it can be seen how much reach it has from the spread of information social media users view and like posts, and influences the popularity of the Arafah Integrated Islamic Elementary School Instagram account on its reach. Because of the use of hashtags, it will be easier for other social media users to find the Arafah Integrated Islamic Elementary School Instagram account. Consumers will more quickly and easily understand messages by using symbols that are relevant to the digital era, thus bringing processes, forms of communication and messages closer to consumers.

One of the uses of symbols that are relevant to the media used is the hashtag (#) for certain campaigns or information related to brand equity activities and marketing communications at Arafah Integrated Islamic Elementary School. Consumers are seen as liking and easily understanding and receiving messages and information using the hashtag (#) because humans are creatures that create symbols and give meaning to them. This is in line with the concept in Symbolic Interaction Theory which states that humans will easily understand messages in the process of communication interaction because Blumer's three main points in (Soeprapto), are: 1) humans act based on the meaning of something for them, 2) meaning is the result of consensus from social interactions between a person and another, and 3) meanings develop and are perfected in the process of ongoing social interaction.

Symbols that are agreed upon and interpreted in the same way by their users, namely in the use of social media there are hashtag symbols that are useful for self-identity and to know the reach of information dissemination from social media users who view published content. This can be found on the Arafah Integrated Islamic Elementary School social media where the hashtag #SDITArafahSampit is always included in the caption of every content posted. The use of the hashtag and the sentence #SDITArafahSampit has made social media users agree on the meaning of the school's identity in each post. Audiance as social media users can also use these hashtags when they upload content about the Arafah Integrated Islamic Elementary School in each of their content posts, in this case there is interaction between the school and the community and the community and the school.

Conclusion

In this situation and condition which is full of new problems, education is deemed to have failed to present itself as a basic need. Interest in learning and going to school continues to experience a downward trend. From what we can see, schools have succeeded in increasing school branding by using social media as a place to market the school's image, in the form of whatsapp, Tiktok, YouTube and

IG. One of the uses of symbols that are relevant to the media used is the hashtag (#) for certain campaigns or information related to brand equity activities and marketing communications at Arafah Integrated Islamic Elementary School. Hopefully in the future the school will get a better image and improve the quality of the school.

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