

PROMOTION MIX OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: AN EXPLORATION OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN SIDOARJO

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Abstract

Promotional activities in higher education are vital to informing and attracting prospective students to choose a university. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the PTKIS-X promotion mix, the obstacles experienced and the development of the promotion mix for promotional activities in the following year. The research method uses a descriptive qualitative approach which is analyzed using POAC (Planning, Organizing, Actualizing and Controlling) management theory. The results showed that direct marketing and digital marketing promotion strategies were very effective in attracting new students. However, constraints experienced by PTKIS-X in promotional activities include a need for more human resources and cooperation with study programs and student organizations. The alternative promotion mix that PTKIS-X can develop is a word-of-mouth promotion activity, which this year resulted in 24% of new students who answered getting information from word of mouth.

Keywords : Promotion mix, promotion strategy, direct marketing, digital marketing, POAC

Introduction

In the current era of globalization, it impacts development and competition not only in industry and conventional services but also in educational institutions, such as higher education or universities. This fact makes competition between educational institutions more intensive. Moreover, it requires educational institutions to be managed professionally and no longer in a conventional way so that they will produce good quality and can compete widely, even internationally (Sihite, 2018).

The demands of intensive competition in the current era of globalization encourage higher education institutions to be more oriented toward marketing and develop a strategy to achieve these goals (Kartika, 2017). The rapid development of science and technology has an impact on people's insights to compare and choose a higher education institution based on the quality of the institution (Kadarisman, 2017). Moreover, technology makes global competition in higher education institutions not only limited to a region. To respond to these changes gradually, higher education institutions began to adopt and apply marketing theories and concepts in the business world; it is none other than to aim to win the competition and get more significant opportunities in getting students.

Marketing management regulates how an educational institution plans to introduce its institution to the general public. Educational institutions are engaged in services whose main objective is consumer/customer satisfaction. In the marketing approach of a service provider, there is a 7P marketing mix approach consisting of (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process and Physical Evidence) with a marketing mix approach; a higher education institution will be able to develop a series of programs and solutions in meeting consumer needs and most importantly achieving company marketing goals (Hendrayani et al., 2021), (Abdullah & Lubis, 2018). Marketing management is currently a vital role related to acquiring new students or students, various marketing strategies that offer various kinds of advantages of each service, and the institution's achievements (Abdus Syukur & Maula, 2017). Furthermore, in the

current era of globalization, promotional activities are needed to communicate and persuade the market regarding the products or services offered through advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and publications (Hendrayani et al., 2021). Other research that discusses the marketing of Islamic education, significantly higher education, has found that promotional activities are one of the tools that significantly change the public interest and the image of higher education (Raya & M.K.F, 2019), (Maspuhah, 2020), (Samat et al., 2018), (Kamal & Rahmadiane, 2017), (Wardhana, 2018). Further research as reinforcement states that promotional strategies are fundamental to providing information on what customers need in educational service, including information related to student development in specific majors in higher education with job opportunities in the business world (Hulleman et al., 2017), (Sihite, 2018), (Patiung et al., 2019).

Given the importance of promotional activities, at this time, many educational institutions form a special team whose job is to take care of promotion. For example, universities form a unique institution or bureau to handle new student admissions, more familiarly known as the New Student Admission Unit (PMB). Likewise, one of the Islamic Religious Private Universities in Sidoarjo (PTKIS), which we call (PTKIS-X), formed a unit specifically to handle PMB. The PMB unit aims to carry out the task of promoting and serving new students who want to register as students at PTKIS-X. The PTKIS-X PMB Unit carries out promotional activities with a promotional mix strategy which has so far been considered successful in increasing the number of new students each year. In connection with the above facts, the researcher is interested in revealing how the implementation and development of the promotion mix strategy and the problems faced by the PTKIS-X PMB team reviewed from the POAC management theory approach (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling). This study's results will reveal the promotional strategies' implementation and the obstacles faced by the PTKIS-X PMB team.

Metodology

This study uses qualitative research methods. The qualitative method is a series of research steps whose results are descriptive data in the form of written words or speech and the observable behavior of the person being observed (Moleong, 2018). Qualitative research methods are based on the philosophy of postpositivism, which is used in research with natural object conditions, with the researcher acting as a critical instrument. The approach taken in this research is descriptive-analytical, which describes all data and the state of the subject or research object, which is then analyzed and compared with empirical facts from other studies.

Data collection techniques in this study used interview techniques, questionnaires, and documentation. The data sources were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman analysis technique, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Arikunto, 2013). This research uses data analysis techniques which consist of summarizing, selecting, focusing on essential things, describing the data briefly, and then drawing conclusions. The data obtained from interviews, questionnaires, and PMB PTKIS-X report documents were summarized and focused on how the implementation of promotions carried out by PMB PTKIS-X was reviewed from POAC. The data that has been summarized is described, and conclusions are drawn on how the implementation of PMB PTKIS-X promotions starts from Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling activities.

Data validity techniques in qualitative research methods can be done using Triangulation. The Triangulation Validity Technique is a data validity checking technique by comparing one fact with another

(Moleong, 2018). In this study, using Triangulation Techniques as a data validity technique to confirm the truth, the data that is declared correct can be found consistently from the three data collection techniques.

Results and Discussion

Promotional activities carried out by PMB PTKIS-X to get the number of new students are analyzed using the POAC Management theory approach, which will be described one by one below:

1. Planning

Planning for promotional activities carried out by PMB PTKIS-X is carried out by organizing a meeting to evaluate promotional activities carried out in the previous year. From this evaluation, planning for promotional activities to be carried out in the 2022-2023 Academic Year can be arranged. Planning promotional activities includes determining the target of obtaining new students, planning promotional strategy activities, and timing the implementation of promotional activities. Based on the data obtained in the 2022-2023 academic year, PTKIS-X set a student acquisition target of 3000 students, with details of the acquisition target for each study program. The target setting refers to the acquisition of students in the previous year by increasing a few percent, and this is done so that the target set is realistic and achievable.

After determining a target and planning the promotional strategy used, PMB PTKIS-X applies a promotional mix strategy in this case. We are focused on Direct Marketing and Digital Marketing strategies even though it also carries out other promotional activities, namely television, radio and newspaper advertising. The selection of the Direct Marketing strategy refers to the acquisition of previous students where the area of origin of students predominantly comes from the area around the campus. The selection of direct marketing strategies is effective in the area around the campus because it can interact directly and provide information (Fahrana & Anggadini, 2021), (Sari & Wijaya, 2020), (Suharyadi & Sedyono, 2018). Concerning Digital Marketing, this strategy is used because, in the 2021-2022 academic year, students who choose PTKIS-X based on Social Media and Website information sources are 72 per cent. Digital marketing promotional activities have an impact on increasing the interest of prospective students, which in the current era is a generation that cannot be separated from gadgets (Siti Amanah, 2018), (Widada et al., 2020), (Nugroho, 2020). Promotional activities are scheduled to be carried out from November 2021 to September 2022.

Overall, the implementation of planning carried out by PMB PTKIS-X starts from determining clear goals or targets that can be measured for achievement, in determining goals or targets, paying attention to conditions and determining the time for implementing promotional activities. Planning not only determines how to plan a goal but also what to do, how to do it and who does it. Compiling a clear plan will make it easier for an institution to achieve goals; in compiling, it must also pay attention to Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic And Time (S.M.A.R.T) (Dakhi, 2016).

2. Organizing

The organizing activities carried out by PMB PTKIS-X begin with creating an Organizational structure that specifically details the work to be done by the staff on duty. There are staff in charge of services and those in charge of carrying out promotional activities. The promotion team is further divided into a team that carries out direct marketing activities and a digital marketing team. This division is based on the competencies possessed by each staff; those who have competence in the digital world are focused on making promotions in the digital field, and those who have good public speaking are appointed to enter the direct marketing team. Promotional activities are prioritized to get contact numbers of prospective

students, both in direct marketing and digital marketing activities. This was done to provide more information.

Contacting prospective new students aims to create a personal interaction with prospective new students. Other research reveals that direct contact with potential customers can influence the decisions of prospective customers; this is because communication is carried out more intensively. After all, in this activity, the seller can find out the wishes and tastes of consumers; thus, the seller can adjust the approach or communication and specific promos to consumers appropriately and accordingly (Renata & Tobari, 2017). The Head of the PMB Division has the authority to command the PMB team members to maintain organizational effectiveness. Evaluation at the internal stage of PMB is carried out before evaluation at the level of the Higher Education leadership. The evaluation results do not rule out the possibility of changes in members because they are related to performance.

Organizing activities carried out by PMB PTKIS-X follow the theory of organizing steps, which describes organizing activities consisting of 5 steps, including detailing all work, dividing workloads, combining work, establishing coordination mechanisms and monitoring organizational effectiveness. In dividing tasks, it must also pay attention to the qualifications, skills and competencies of a member, which requires a leader in the organization to have guidelines and criteria for effective organizational performance (Dakhi, 2016), (Arifin et al., 2013).

3. Actuating

At this stage, PMB PTKIS-X conducts promotional activities following a predetermined plan which is divided into two promotional activities, namely direct marketing and digital marketing promotional activities. Direct marketing and digital marketing promotional activities are carried out simultaneously, but direct marketing activities are carried out based on a schedule that has been made. The schedule is adjusted to the existence of school events, expos and direct visits to schools that have agreed. With direct meetings, it is hoped that there will be Public Relations with prospective students and SMA/SMK/MA Education institutions so that direct marketing activities continue beyond the time of the event. Public Relations has a very fundamental role in developing the reputation of higher education to increase the interest of prospective new students to join (Syakur & Panuju, 2020). As for digital marketing promotion activities, the PMB PTKIS-X team actively creates content on social media, Instagram, Tiktok and YouTube. Promotional activities using online media can be carried out to replace billboard or billboard advertising activities which are currently ineffective (Siti Amanah, 2018). In the implementation of direct promotion, PMB PTKIS-X always tries to capture student contact numbers so that it is hoped. There will be further interaction with prospective new students, and every time PMB PTKIS-X updates information, these prospective students can see it.

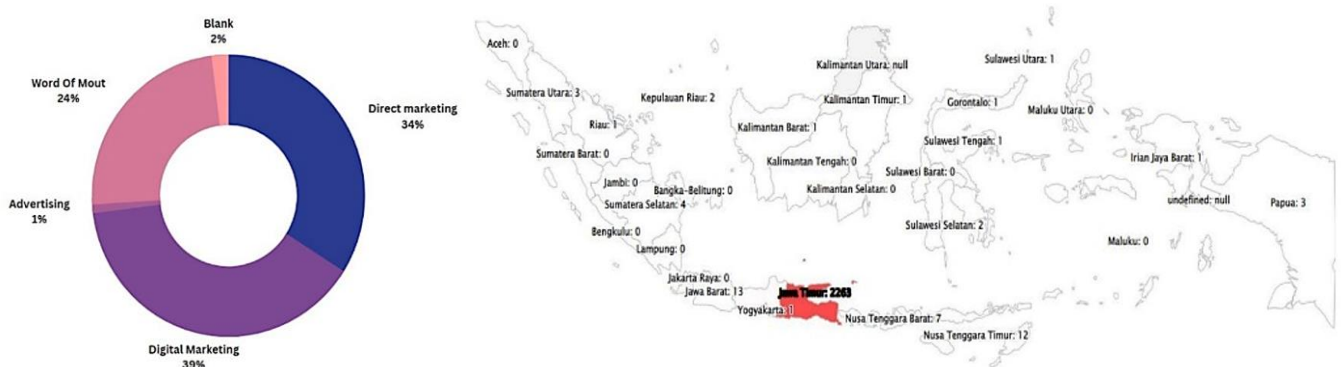
Promotional activities are carried out from the beginning of the opening of the 2021-2022 academic year until the start of the 2022-2023 academic year. During the promotional activities, PMB PTKIS-X used promotional programs, including dividing the registration period into several batches with different fees in each batch, offering several scholarships (KIP, Bidikmisi, Tahfidz) and collaboration paths with agencies. In addition to using the promotional programs above, PMB PTKIS-X is also active in making competitions in collaboration with study programs intended for high school/vocational/MA equivalent students where outstanding students will get scholarships.

4. Controlling

Supervision in the PMB activities of PTKIS-X is an act of periodic supervision carried out by the head of the PMB field and the College's leadership related to the acquisition of new students. Whether following predetermined achievement standards, this supervision activity at the implementation stage is carried out every three months and conducts a comprehensive evaluation at the end of PMB activities for the 2022-2023 academic year. Supervision activities aim to ensure that the performance carried out follows predetermined standards; if there is a significant difference, action can be taken to revise goals or targets or improve performance (Dakhi, 2016).

At the end of the implementation, an evaluation was carried out regarding the effectiveness of the PTKIS-X PMB promotion strategy and tools, with correspondence of newly registered students. The data will be compiled to obtain data on the distribution of students' regions of origin, where students receive information about PTKIS-X and students' schools of origin. The evaluation report is compiled into a report. The results of the promotional activities carried out by PMB PTKIS-X obtained an achievement of 96%, namely 2408 students. Direct marketing contributed to the acquisition of new students by 34% and digital marketing by 39%. This data shows that direct and digital marketing use is still effective and can be continued for the coming year. The area of origin of students is still dominated by the eastern region, especially the city of Sidoarjo, where PTKIS-X is located.

Figure 1 : Total new students by Promotion Mix and Region of Origin



Source: Report on the Results of PTKIS-X Promotion Activities for Academic Year 2022-2023

The obstacles faced by PMB PTKIS-X in carrying out promotional activities are related to the number of human resources. The existing resources are felt to be lacking, so they experience limitations in participating in events such as car-free days and other field events; besides that, the PMB team also still needs animators. The current era requires an attractive promotion with the icon of animation. Related to the status of staff who are still part-time workers, it limits assigning tasks. Furthermore, there is no influencer from the PTKIS-X academic community, so it cannot maximize the viewer of social media accounts.

PTKIS-X has never made an event held independently for students at the high school/vocational/MA level, making PTKIS-X less known to the public on a scale outside East Java; in the future, it is necessary to hold the event. Regarding the lack of synergy between the academic community, there needs to be synchronization of the study program's promotion schedule and the PTKIS-X PMB team. In addition, there needs to be a cooperation scheme with the Student Organization, both of which must be maximized. The use of word-of-mouth strategies also needs to be considered considering that the survey results show a

positive thing, namely 24%; in the future, it needs to be maximized to disseminate information to both employees and active students so that it can spread public information.

Conclusion

Implementation of the promotion mix at PTKIS-X in terms of POAC management, promotional activities are carried out starting with setting targets, both student acquisition targets and target areas for promotional activities. A promotion mix strategy was chosen to achieve the target, which focused on direct and digital marketing. The promotion mix carried out by PMB PTKIS-X was successful because it almost met the target of 96%. Regarding the selection of direct and digital marketing strategies, the results are promising, with a percentage above 70%. In the 2022-2023 academic year, the acquisition of PTKIS-X students is still dominated by students from the city of Sidoarjo itself, which makes it essential to carry out direct marketing promotional activities because PTKIS-X competitors in the city of Sidoarjo are increasing. Promotional activities are supported by promo programs provided in the form of time division of registration periods with different fees, discounts on registration fees to tuition fees in some instances of cooperation or scholarships. Supervisory activities (controlling) are carried out during promotional activities. The report at the end of the activity is used as the basis for designing promotional activities for the following year. The obstacles experienced are the need for more human resources and the lack of cooperation with study programs and student organizations. Digital marketing activities can be improved with exciting content and thinking about influencers who can increase viewers from PTKIS-X social media accounts. The development of promotional mix activities that PMB PTKIS-X can carry out includes adding a word-of-mouth strategy, which is very practical based on surveys conducted on PTKIS-X new students. Word-of-mouth promotional activities can be carried out by utilizing PTKIS-X lecturers, students and employees as promotional agents. Overcome obstacles related to human resources and it can be done by increasing cooperation with study programs and student organizations at PTKIS-X so that promotional activities can be carried out more optimally. High school/vocational/MA level competition activities need to be carried out to introduce the campus environment to 3rd-grade students who will have the opportunity to become prospective new students.

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