



### Analysis of Public Relations Program in Building School Branding (Multisite Study at SMP IT Harapan Mulia Palembang and SMP IT Al Furqon Palembang)

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#### Abstract

School public relations is one of the school's management functions in the field of public relations. It is supposed to act as a bridge between the organization and its constituents, establishing communication and sustaining positive relationships. The purpose of this study is to examine the school's public relations program for the purpose of developing school branding. This study used a qualitative approach, employing a case study design with multiple sites. Principals, school public relations, and PPDB members are the main data sources. Techniques for data collection was observation, interviewing, and documentation. Data analysis is a technique that entails data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The result was: The public relations program activities of SMP IT Harapan Mulia Palembang are as follows: 1) develop school logos and uniforms, 2) develop taglines, 4) develop a characteristic and outstanding program, and 6) pursue successes. Communication; 1) establish social media platforms such as facebook, whatsapp, youtube, and instagram; 2) establish corporate partnerships; 3) establish calendars; 4) establish press relations; and 5) organize family meetings. And the activities of the public relations program at SMP IT AL Furqon Palembang: 1) developed superior programs for full-day and boarding school programs, 2) created slogans for thinkers, dhikr experts, and endeavor experts. 3) Designing school logos and uniforms; 4) establishing special programs; and 5) recruiting qualified and competent educators. Additional communication includes the following: 1) leveraging social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Whatsapp, and YouTube. 2) develop a school website; 3) form corporate relationships; 4) meeting with parents; and 5) meeting with the local community. It can be stated that the school public relations program is highly effective at developing school branding, even though various obstacles exist in its implementation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Year after year, the world of education has witnessed numerous phenomena, one of which is the emergence of new schools, particularly private schools. This, of course, creates competition between new schools and established private schools, with each school scrambling to establish a positive image in the community. Today's phenomenon is that a number of private educational institutions are losing ground to public educational institutions, regardless of how effective a public relations figure is at attracting new students (Rahman, 2020). Brands are purposefully established to have a beneficial impact on the community, and vice versa, a negative brand will have a negative impact on an organization (Lela & Rustiana, 2018). In the realm of education, image is important, as it contributes to the organization's perceived value in comparison to other organizations (Hayanti et al., 2019).

Consumers and prospective parents of students are becoming increasingly critical when it comes to selecting a product. Especially in the present era, parents can easily find information on social media and the internet about academic achievements and school quality that is mentioned in a school brand that will be offered and distributed to students to attract the interest of future consumers. As one of the key stakeholders, parents play a critical role in the education sector as decision makers and shape children's perceptions of themselves as students capable of meeting their children's needs (Sari & Prasetya, 2020). The advancement of science and technology requires schools to change in order to remain viable. According to Wibowo and Soliha, the school's image can also influence student satisfaction with educational institutions, which school stakeholders must consider (Irham et al., 2020).

In this case, the school functions similarly to an organization, requiring consistent and well-coordinated management. If management concerns are not addressed appropriately, the organization's development will be hampered. Public relations management is a critical aspect of

school management (Humas). Public relations are a deliberate and ongoing attempt to build and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its constituents. According to Nasution, maintaining the school's image requires the expertise of the school's public relations officers, because public relations cannot be separated from public opinion (Ningsih & Pramusinto, 2017). Because public relations in schools attempts to foster communication and relationships with stakeholders to foster mutual understanding and mutual benefit (Iriantara, 2013). Thus, public relations serves as a communication bridge between schools and the community as consumers, as it can help increase parents' and students' trust in school. (Widhiyarti & Ismiyati, 2017)

Public relations activities can be divided into internal and external activities (Priandono, 2019). At educational institutions, public relations activities include the following: 1) Fostering external relations (external public) This activity is directed at the community or general public outside the school with the goal of introducing school potential or information. 2) Fostering internal relations (internal public); this activity is aimed toward school members.

Today's phenomenon is that a number of private educational institutions are losing ground to public educational institutions, regardless of how effective a public relations personality is at attracting new students (Rahman, 2020). Additionally, this effort is motivated by the growing competition among existing private schools. Branding can be an effective tool for attracting new students.

Sandra Oliver stated that branding, or the perceived imagery generated by the consumer, would build a memory for the product (Wahyuni, 2018). The school's brand is intended to appropriately package what has been accomplished and achieved, not to disguise bad things as good (Sholihah, 2018). These assumptions are formed on the basis of classification, support, superiority, uniqueness, and memory. According to Kavartzis (2005), branding is a two-way communication approach

that integrates perceived quality and existing values into a brand or brand image.

Thus, if the notion of branding in school educational institutions is accurate, school branding is a commercial or communication activity focused on creating a superior and unique school identity for educational institutions for consumers to choose the school.

Therefore, school public relations must support this effort through a variety of activities that must be consistent with the school's vision and mission. Each school has its own distinct characteristics, vision, and mission, as well as its own culture and advantages; this has served as a platform for the deputy head of public relations to communicate with the broader community (Mahfuzhah & Anshari, 2018). According to Amin Nur in (Suardi, 2017) There are several business techniques for developing school-community relations, including "through school magazines, school newspapers, school activity exhibitions, open houses, visits to students' homes, alumni association organizations, school profiles through student creations, extracurricular activities, and parent progress reports."

Previous research has been carried out such as the thesis of Wibowo (2018). The studies that have been conducted have a difference in that the previous research focused on school strategy and image building, whereas this study focused on and determined the public relations program in building school branding, and has never been carried out before.

Although not all schools understand school branding, there are currently numerous schools in Palembang that dare to brand themselves as one of the leading schools and are well-known for their features. SMP IT Harapan Mulia Palembang and SMP IT Al Furqon Palembang are two examples.

To begin, it is worth noting that SMP IT Harapan Mulia Palembang already has its own branding, embodying the concept of "Creating a SMART (Manner, Independent, Religious, and Responsible) generation" through the establishment of We develop "decent, self-supporting, pious, and responsible individuals capable of navigating the twenty-first century" by

giving engaging learning using digital means such as iPad Classes and memorizing the Qur'an through the Ummi Method. Already has a vice principal in the field of public relations but has not established a permanent organizational structure; it's just that the time for implementing PPDB has passed, as has the lack of maximum direct promotions such as banner installation and brochure distribution, as well as the lack of movement due to restrictions still in place in a pandemic atmosphere, from the use of social media such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and websites are still included in the foundation and their use. In the 2018/2019 academic year, there were 85 students, 100 in 2019/2020, and 97 in 2020/2021. This is demonstrated by the data on new student registration, which is not consistent; in fact, it has declined somewhat in the 2020/2021 academic year. but it was not significantly decreased.

Second, based on initial observations, SMP IT Al Furqon Palembang also branded the school with the tagline "Full day and boarding school." Experts in Thought, Dhikr, and Efforts, and already have a vice principal with experience in public relations to market and brand schools in order to increase their visibility in the larger community, even if the implementation is not optimum. School public relations lack an organizational framework, professionals, and human resources, not to mention movement constraints during a pandemic. And the lack of direct advertising, such as the installation of banners and pamphlets, has resulted in inefficient use of social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, as well as the website. 154 pupils registered for the 2018/2019 academic year, 146 for the 2019/2020 school year, and 139 for the 2020/2021 academic year. This may be observed in the data on new students who have enrolled year after year, which has fallen in comparison to the total number of registrants at that school.

According to the data available, the issue is that not everyone is aware of the potential of SMP IT Harapan Mulia Palembang and SMP IT Al Furqon Palembang. However, they may still survive in terms of fresh student admissions and

have not seen a large decline in student enrollment. That there is insufficient knowledge about the school's capacity, let alone the organizational structure, which is still in the process of restricting movement in a pandemic environment.

Based on these issues, the role of the school's public relations function in developing a school brand is critical, with the hope that this research can help develop a school brand as a follow-up to the establishment of a school public relations work program model. Schools, particularly private schools, must be able to fight for and maintain their existence, as well as SMP IT Harapan Mulia and SMP IT Al Furqon Palembang.

The author's primary focus is on "Analysis of the Public Relations Program in Building School Branding (Multisite Study at SMP IT Harapan Mulia and SMP IT Al Furqon Palembang)."

## METHODS

This research used a qualitative approach in the form of a case study and a multi-site design, which involved multiple sites (locations) and research respondents who were assumed to share similar characteristics, in order to develop the theory proposed and make it generalizable.

The purpose of this study was to examine the school's public relations program for the purpose of developing school branding. Data sources included main informants and supporting informants. The primary data in this study came from principals, public relations representatives, and PPDB members. Secondary data is gathered from documents and records.

The data collection technique was non-participatory observation; the researchers did not participate in the interviews but observed, recorded, and photographed the outcomes of the interviews with the school as well as supporting data on social media or websites. Interviews conducted in the manner of open-ended standard interviews, as well as documentation. Researchers employed a credibility test to determine the validity of their data, which

included prolonged observations, peer discussions, enhanced persistence in research, member checks, the use of reference materials, and triangulation. This study used interactive data analysis models in this work, which comprised data reduction, data display, and verification.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The progress of science and technology demanded adaptation on the part of schools to maintain their existence (Rahmadini & Halim, 2018). Many wise expressions originated in school public relations, specifically in response to various criticisms associated with superior achievements and programs, but the intended achievements and superior programs are rarely communicated to the broader community, and bad news spreads faster than good news from the world of education. As if the continual communication practice validates the adage that "bad news is good news." This is the communicative and social context in which the world of education operates, which required the renewal of schools' public relations practices. Schools as formal educational institutions are an open system, which means that they can exist due to community influence (Irawanda & Bachtiar, 2020).

School programs will succeed if they have support from all stakeholders, including the community; thus, public relations was expected to foster positive relationships (Putri & Pramusinto, 2019). Generally, school public relations programs are divided into two categories: acting and communicating (Iriantara, 2013).

The findings indicated that public relations were established at SMP IT Harapan Mulia Palembang and SMP IT Al Furqon Palembang, with the aim of serving all school publications in developing a school brand that could be communicated to the public foster a positive perception of the benefits, potential, and accomplishments of schools that could benefit the school's vision and mission.

According to Nasution, the school's public relations management function must be capable of acting as a mediator in delivering messages directly (face-to-face) and indirectly (through the press) to institutional leaders and the internal public (teachers, employees, and students), Backup management, support, and assistance with activities associated with educational publishing institutions. In this situation, public relations acts as an information manager for both the internal and external publics, including information dissemination to the press and promotion. Image builder, tasked with the responsibility of promoting a positive image of the educational institution (Sari & Soegiarto, 2019).

SMP IT Harapan Mulia Palembang can be seen in its design and publications, where it compared schools with advantages, such as smart room classes and the TTQ Ummi method. Additionally, there are sports, olympiad clubs, and podcasts, with the tagline "we create "decent, self-supporting, religious, and responsible figures capable of facing the twenty-first century."

The results indicated that public relations at SMP IT Harapan Mulia Palembang first emphasized and unified the school's vision and mission, and then facilitated the implementation of programs through action activities, specifically action strategies that included various things such as making changes. 1) PR creates a school logo; 2) PR creates school uniforms, including suits, vests, sports apparel, and daily wear for both students and faculty. 3) developing tag lines that become school jargon 4) developing a characteristic, for example, this school aggressively provides students with both academic knowledge and character development, cultivating individuals who are self-sufficient, religious, and capable of competing in the 21st century. 5) develop outstanding programs such as the smart classroom, the ttq ummi method, the club olympiad, sport & art, and a podcast. 6) pursuit of achievement; the institution offers discounts to exceptional students or prospective students. Communication is the act of conveying information or messages to the general population. 1) establish social media accounts on

platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube, and Instagram. 2) build cooperation; ACT, The Botol Sosro Company, and Bank Sumsel Babel, etc., 3) calendar production; 4) media relations; RRI radio, print media news, or online Sumatra express 5) Family gatherings with guardians, such as Eid al-Fitr and communal break fasting.

The following activities represent the public relations program at SMP IT Harapan Mulia Palembang as a communicator: alumni meetings, formal meetings, conveying information via flag ceremonies, sound speakers, distributing pamphlets and banners, meetings with parents, and publications about events, achievements, and announcements about schools via social media. Back-up Management: Promoting print and online media, organizing social and religious activities with the community, including low-cost necessities, qurban, takjil, social services to orphanages, fundraising, and zakat, as well as establishing collaborations and visits with companies, print media, the ACT, and the government. Image Maker: Appears in print and radio media, serves the public, designs creations and sayings for major holidays, knowledge videos, and achievements via social media, encourages students to participate in competitions outside of school, organizes competition events by inviting other schools, and participated in community activities.

Indeed, there are some outline potins from the public relations program that pertain to the development of school branding. Schools have attempted to create and be sensitive to social change; public relations for SMP IT Harapan Mulia Palembang has been quite successful in implementing PPDB; it has been demonstrated that enrollment has been maintained despite a slight decline in enrollment; now, other schools are complaining about the zoning system, not to mention the pandemic.

Additionally, SMP IT Al Furqon Palembang is observed from the design in terms of its advantages, which included the habituation of Islamic morality and worship, the development of tahfizhul qur'an and Olympic

abilities, and literacy activities through the flagship program Full-day and Boarding school Accredited "Expert of Dhikr, Expert Thought, and Expert Effort" as a tagline".

The results of research at SMP IT Al Furqon Palembang indicate that the public relations program is visible through action activities: 1) develop a superior program in which students can choose between a full-day program or boarding school, where they can stay and study in the male dormitory or the female dormitory. 2) develop slogans for thinkers, dhikr experts, and endeavor experts; 3) design school logos and uniforms; 4) identify special programs; and 5) recruit skilled and competent educators. Additional communication includes the following: 1) used social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Whatsapp, and YouTube. 2) Establish a school website; 3) Partner with companies such as PT Mayora, PT Sosro, and Bank Sumsel Babel. 4) Meeting with parents; 5) meetings with the local neighborhood; community clean-up activities; opportunity for community members to use school infrastructure.

As a result, the public relations program at SMP IT Al Furqon Palembang as a Communicator: hosts internal meetings, disseminates information via sound speakers, facilitates student orientation, fosters relationships with parents, organizes school alumni meetings, promotes the school through various print and online media, makes school presentations, and communicates with the government and society. Visits and collaborations with companies, collaboration with Brimob police, school anniversary celebrations, holding training and workshops, collaborating with the community on social activities such as cheap bazaars, zakat distribution, and social and religious services such as the prophet's birthday, isra miraj, and communal break fasting, print and social media promotion, distributing flyers to schools, and installing banners in schools and important locations over South Sumatra. Improve school services and quality, motivate teachers and students to excel with coaches, publications about activities, creations, information, and student

accomplishments, packaging something that is extremely active on social media platforms such as facebook, instagram, whatsapp, and youtube, and websites, organizing events and competitions, and participation in community activities such as environmental cleanup.

All have roles, from the head of the foundation to the principal and teacher structure, to determine school programs and public relations programs that are tailored to the vision and mission of the IT Al Furqon Middle School. The authors envision this school emphasizing academic excellence, achievement, and moral character. The public relations effort is performing well, despite a few obstacles in its implementation.

According to the findings of the research, we know which factors influence the implementation of the school public relations program at SMP IT Harapan Mulia Palembang, included: 1) The work program is structured, and where public relations had a critical role in identifying potential, school public relations must also be able to identify phenomena that occur to develop a school branding program. 2) Funding and infrastructural support from the principal and foundation, as well as from the sarpras, are being maintained and improved. 3) Synergy, which includes all the principal schools for staff to cooperate in the public school system. 4) The zoning and pandemic systems; as a result of zoning, parents naturally prefer to enroll their children in public schools first, not to mention the limited mobility and activities of school public relations in implementing programs; some programs have yet to begin. 5) Human resources, limited resources because the ppdb is still in its infancy, a team comprised only one deputy public relations officer who moves and the others help. 6) Experts, a lack of technicians, and those capable of designing social media postings become less appealing, and the website ceases to exist.

However, of all the factors influenced schools in terms of school branding, they were successful; the number of students is maintained year after year, indicating that the

public relations campaign was well implemented, but with some obstacles and not optimally.

Additionally, at SMP IT Al Furqon Palembang, we understand the factors that influence the implementation of the school public relations program, including the following: 1) The arrangement of work programs, where public relations had an important role, and recognizing the potential that exists, school public relations must also be able to recognize the phenomena that occur in order to create a program to brand schools. 2) Funding and infrastructural assistance from the primary and foundations, as well as from sarpras, continued maintained and improved. 3) Synergy, in which all parties involved, including school principals and employees, work cooperatively in the public education system. 4) Zoning and pandemic systems, because parents want to send their children to public schools first, not to mention the limited mobility and activities of school public relations in implementing programs, and some programs are still not functioning. 5) Human resources, limited resources due to the fact that when ppdb was founded, the team consisted only of a deputy head of public relations who relocated, and the others assisted. 6) Experts, those lacked in technicians, and ones capable of designing social media postings are slightly less appealing and engaged on social media.

However, of all the factors influenced schools' branding efforts, they were relatively successful; the improving quality of students and year-over-year achievements showed that the public relations program is performing well, although with certain obstacles and not at its optimal level. Finally, the school benefited from the implementation of the public relations campaign by developing the school's brand, which influenced both the school and the local neighborhood. The following are the primary indicators of a school's image-building success: 1) the number of students who enroll and are accepted into a school; 2) the level of community participation; and 3) the level of student achievement in a school (Sholikhah, 2021).

Indeed, the PR program's impact at SMP IT Harapan Mulia Palembang and SMP IT Al Furqon Palembang was positive, almost similar to that of attracted quality students, increasing achievement, promoted positive student morals, increasing public attractiveness, institutional trust, and improved the quality of school services.

## CONCLUSION

From the description above, it can be concluded that the public relations program for school branding was performed well at both SMP IT Harapan Mulia and SMP IT Al Furqon Palembang, but there are still obstacles due to several programs that have yet to be implemented. Without the support of a service, quality, and the support of all schools, schools will be unable to recognize the excellent potential that exists in schools. Without good infrastructure and well-planned public relations program, excellent program will be useless, and people prefer to send their children to private school instead.

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