

Implementation of Digital Marketing Strategy in Equivalency Education Program

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly influenced marketing strategies in various fields, including education. Equivalency education programs, which provide opportunities for individuals to attain education equivalent to formal schooling, must adopt effective digital marketing strategies to reach wider audiences and increase enrollment. This research aims to explore how digital marketing strategies are implemented in equivalency education programs and evaluate their effectiveness in promoting these programs. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method, gathering data through observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews with key informants managing equivalency education programs. The digital marketing strategy involves several stages, including situation analysis, digital marketing planning, goal setting, strategy creation, execution, budget preparation, and marketing evaluation. The implementation primarily uses print media, websites, and social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business. The analysis shows that digital marketing, particularly through social media platforms, has proven to be highly effective in promoting equivalency education programs. Digital marketing strategies play a crucial role in increasing the visibility and appeal of equivalency education programs. Social media, particularly Instagram and WhatsApp Business, are identified as the most impactful tools for reaching the target audience. This study highlights the specific stages and tools that make digital marketing particularly effective in the context of equivalency education programs, offering insights into best practices for other educational institutions looking to enhance their promotional efforts.

Keywords: digital marketing strategy; equality education programs; social media

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INTRODUCTION

Various forms and types of educational services, both public and private, are developing rapidly in society (Patawaran, Purwanti, Nirtha, & Ismail, 2023). Several types of education that are often found in urban communities are formal educational institutions, early childhood education, courses, TPQ, and equivalency education (chasing package). The term equivalency education emerged in the 1970s in the form of a group study program (kejar) Paket A which is a program to eradicate illiteracy using learning materials from A1-A100 package books (Ekowati, et al., 2020). Until now, the term equivalency education is still used by the general public to obtain out-of-school education services, although in the 2000s in line with the

demands for changes in developing programs, equivalency education was born under the auspices of the Directorate of Childhood Education, the Directorate of Courses and Institutions, and the Directorate of Equivalency Education (Danial, Ibrahim, & Saud, 2023).

In 2003, the National Education System Law (Sisdiknas) No. 20 of 2003 was enacted, article 13 paragraph 1, which states that the educational pathways organized in Indonesia consist of formal education, non-formal education, and informal education that complement and enrich each other. Coinciding with this, the types of non-formal education were also expanded into eight types, namely life skills education, early childhood education, youth education, women's empowerment education, literacy education, skills education and job training, equivalency education, and other education aimed at developing students (Rahmi, Zaini, Muslim, & Junaris, 2021). Up to the Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 17 of 2010 concerning the management and implementation of education, article 114 paragraph 1, which emphasizes that equivalency education is a non-formal education program that organizes general education equivalent to SD/MI, SMP/MTs, and SMA/MA which includes Package A, Package B, and vocational Package C programs Regulation of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia).

Equivalency education is a non-formal education service at the elementary and secondary levels. The target participants of equivalency education are members of the community who meet the requirements for compulsory education and meet the requirements as students in the Package A program, Package B program, or Package C program. The objectives of organizing equivalency education include equipping students with academic abilities, functional skills, and vocational skills of the profession, as well as professional attitudes and personalities.

Community learning activity centers (PKBM) are institutions that organize equivalency education programs. Community learning activity centers (PKBM) are defined as places of learning formed from, by, and for the community to improve the knowledge, skills, attitudes, hobbies, and talents of the community that are based on the meaningfulness and usefulness of the program for students by exploring and utilizing the potential of human resources and natural resources in their environment (Sucipto, Wiyono, Rasyad, Dayati, & Purwito, 2021). In its implementation, PKBM can organize early childhood education programs, literacy education, equivalency education, women's empowerment education, life skills education, youth education, work skills education, and other non-formal education needed by the community (PP no. 17 of 2010 concerning the implementation of education).

Problems often encountered in the implementation of equivalency education include the community not yet being familiar with the term equivalency education. Changes in policies and developments in non-formal education do not reach the community properly (Cahlikova & Bundi, 2020). This can be proven by the ease with which the community recognizes the term equivalency education compared to the name of the PKBM institution or equivalency education program. The community needs to be given an introduction to the PKBM institution by experts or figures who work in the field of non-formal education. This is very necessary to facilitate the community who are looking for information related to the implementation of the best non-formal education organized by PKBM.

PKBM Budi Utama in Surabaya City was also affected by the problem. Based on the findings in the field, PKBM Budi Utama said that people who came to register found it difficult to find information about the implementation of the package chase and often they had to come to the wrong institution before finally coming to PKBM. Most of the problems from the

community are that they do not know that equivalency education or package chase is a program organized by PKBM.

Entering the era of digitalization and the rapid development of information technology, PKBM Budi Utama also utilizes the development of digital marketing as a digital media to introduce the programs held. Digital Marketing is the use of the internet as a technology that can connect two-way communication between companies and consumers (Kumar, Raman, & Meenakshi, 2021). Another opinion explains digital marketing as a form of application of digital technology that forms an online channel to the market (in the form of websites, e-mail, and other social media) that contributes to marketing activities so that it aims to gain profit and retain consumers (Astutik, et al., 2023) by enhancing brand visibility and engagement.

Digital Marketing facilitates the introduction of institutions widely, such as the use of social media which is widely used by education providers (Harini, Wahyuningtyas, Sutrisno, Wanof, & Ausat, 2023) to engage with prospective students and promote their programs effectively. By leveraging targeted advertising and content marketing, institutions can reach a broader audience and enhance their visibility in a competitive landscape.

The concept of digital marketing is to utilize a wide publication area through media such as television, radio, mobile devices, and the Internet. The media will provide infographics about various services the institution provides, especially emphasizing the brand of a service (Swami, 2023) offered. This approach not only enhances visibility but also engages potential students by showcasing success stories and testimonials from alumni, thereby building trust and credibility in the program. Digital marketing is the most powerful means to increase the brand of a service provided. Another advantage of digital marketing is that it can reach all groups, anytime, in any way, and anywhere (Noerlina & Mursitama, 2022). The specialty of a digital marketing strategy is that the strategy is flexible, modular, and easy to shape to suit continuous changes without damaging what has been implemented.

There are five main types of digital marketing forms, including: 1) Transactional e-commerce sites. Manufacturing companies, travel services, e-retailers that provide products that are marketed online, for example, shopee.co.id, tokopedia.com, and so on; 2) Service-oriented relationship-building sites that provide information that interests customers and builds relationships, for example, information through websites and marketing emails to inform purchasing decisions; 3) Brand building sites provide experiences to support a brand; 4) Portals or media sites that aim to provide information and content, for example kompas.com, detik.com or so on; and 5) Social networks or community sites that allow consumer community interaction digitally, for example Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, etc (Effendy, Mas'adi, & Murtiyoko, 2021).

In the digital age, traditional methods of promotion, such as print media and word-of-mouth, are no longer sufficient to capture the attention of today's tech-savvy learners. With the increasing reliance on the internet and social media for information, equivalency education programs must adopt digital marketing strategies to stay relevant and accessible (Zulhilmi, 2023). Failure to adapt to this shift could result in declining enrollment rates and the marginalization of these important educational opportunities. This highlights the urgent need for educational institutions, particularly those offering equivalency education, to invest in and optimize digital marketing approaches. Digital marketing offers a cost-effective, far-reaching solution for promoting educational programs. Platforms such as social media, websites, and online advertising can significantly expand the reach of equivalency education, making it easier to connect with potential learners who may not be aware of these opportunities (Qian,

Sui, & Wang, 2023). Despite this potential, there is limited research on how digital marketing strategies are specifically applied to equivalency education programs. This gap in the literature makes it necessary to examine and understand the best practices for implementing effective digital marketing in this context.

This study addresses a critical gap by focusing on the specific strategies used to promote equivalency education programs through digital marketing. While digital marketing is widely studied in business and formal education sectors, little attention has been given to its application in equivalency education. By providing a comprehensive analysis of the stages involved in implementing digital marketing from situational analysis and strategy development to execution and evaluation (Gerasimenko, 2021). This research offers new insights into how digital tools can be leveraged to improve program visibility and engagement. Moreover, it highlights the effectiveness of using platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business, which have been underexplored in the context of alternative education marketing. Thus, this study not only contributes to the growing body of knowledge on digital marketing in education but also provides practical recommendations for institutions seeking to enhance the appeal of their equivalency education programs. The findings can serve as a reference for educational policymakers and program administrators aiming to modernize their outreach strategies and maximize the impact of their programs in an increasingly digital world.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive design to explore the implementation of digital marketing strategies in the promotion of equivalency education programs at PKBM Budi Utama. Qualitative research is a method for exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups of people consider to come from social or humanitarian problems (Yim, 2020). The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the strategies and processes involved, focusing on the experiences and insights of key stakeholders. The descriptive nature of the study aims to provide a detailed account of how digital marketing is utilized and its effectiveness in reaching the target audience.

The participants of this research consist of 4 key informants (1 leaders and 3 managers) from PKBM Budi Utama. These include one leader of the institution and three managers responsible for managing the digital marketing efforts aimed at promoting the institution's equivalency education programs. These individuals were selected due to their direct involvement and experience in overseeing and implementing digital marketing strategies within the organization.

This study covers non-formal education units, namely PKBM Budi Utama, which implements digital marketing strategies in equivalency education programs. Data collection techniques in this study used interview, observation, and documentation techniques. Interview techniques are used to obtain information directly from research subjects in depth to the leaders and managers of the institution. Observation techniques are carried out by observing the phenomena that occur in research subjects. Meanwhile, documentation techniques are needed to support information obtained from interviews and observations, including digital marketing data that has been implemented.

The validity of the data in this study uses triangulation of data sources to refer to the same information. Data validity testing is carried out by member checking to ensure that the

answers from the sources are following the information provided. Data analysis used in this study is using interactive flow analysis. Meanwhile, data reduction is carried out by eliminating unnecessary information and storing the necessary data and classifying it according to needs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of interviews with several informants, leaders, and 3 managers of the Budi Utama PKBM institution who have managed digital marketing in marketing the Budi Utama PKBM equivalency education program. In the interview, the informants conveyed their perceptions of the "Implementation of digital marketing strategies in equivalency education programs". Among the questions in the interview that the author asked, among others: 1) strategy for analyzing situations; 2) e-marketing planning strategy; 3) goal determination; 4) marketing strategy; 5) implementation plan; 6) budget; and 7) evaluation plan.

Based on the results of interviews with 4 informants, the following situation analysis results were obtained: 1) Informant 1, analyzed the transition from conventional to digital marketing; 2) Informant 2, observed social media that has more users; 3) Informant 3, identified the needs of the community regarding equal education; and 4) Informant 4, the application of social media is easier compared to other media.

The e-marketing planning strategy obtained the following results: 1) Informant 1, implemented by looking at opportunities and promotion targets; 2) Informant 2, implemented by designing the information needs to be required; 3) Informant 3, implemented by choosing social media with a wider reach; and 4) Informant 4, implemented by preparing effective media. The determination of e-marketing objectives obtained the following results: 1) Informant 1, determined the target community more widely and added partners; 2) Informant 2, the goal is that information can be delivered comprehensively; 3) Informant 3, the goal is to attract public interest in going to school for equivalent education; and 4) Informant 4, the goal is that the media used can reach many groups.

The marketing strategy obtained the following results: 1) Informant 1, the strategy implemented by promoting equal education and the facilities obtained; 2) Informant 2, the strategy implemented by disseminating the learning activities implemented; 3) Informant 3, the strategy implemented by informing the achievements achieved by the institution and students; and 4) Informant 4, the strategy used by providing the most attractive promotional media display possible.

The implementation plan obtained the following results: 1) Informant 1, the implementation can be shared to all social media, digital, and WhatsApp groups; 2) Informant 2, implemented by branding yourself by posting a lot of activities carried out daily or certain activities on Instagram that have been carried out since 2021; 3) Informant 3, implemented by diligently creating materials to be posted, editing materials as attractively as possible using Canva or Cap cut.; and 4) Informant 4, implemented by creating content, creating content hashtags to make it trending.

The e-marketing budget obtained the following results: 1) Informant 1, for print media and mass media, the funding comes from the institution's operational costs sourced from students and businesses; 2) Informant 2, social media does not require costs; 3) Informant 3, for social media, no costs are required, but for posting on websites and newspapers, the funding comes from the institution's operational costs; and 4) Informant 4, no costs are required.

The e-marketing evaluation obtained the following results: 1) Informant 1, supervision was carried out, and the results were seen; 2) Informant 2, usually done to ensure that all activities are delivered properly; 3) Informant 3, evaluation was carried out by looking at the

registration of students who got information from what information sources; and 4) Informant 4, what social media needs to be used again besides existing social media.

From the interview transcript above, it can be concluded that the implementation of digital marketing strategies at the Budi Utama PKBM institution is carried out with 1) a strategy to analyze the situation; 2) an e-marketing planning strategy; 3) determining goals; 4) marketing strategy; 5) implementation plan; 6) budget; and 7) evaluation plan.

Related to the digital marketing strategy presented above, the researcher also made a list of documentation related to the digital marketing used. The documentation technique was carried out to find out the media used in digital marketing. Some digital marketing media that the researcher successfully documented include: 1) Marketing through websites/blogs; 2) Marketing through portals or media sites; and 3) Marketing through social media. As for the documentation results that were successfully obtained, the author includes them in the following Image 1 until 5.



Figure 1. Marketing through website



Figure 2. Marketing Through the Daily Newspaper Nation



Figure 3. Marketing Through Instagram



Figure 4. Marketing Through Facebook



Figure 5. Marketing Through Whatsapp Business

The digital era encourages the use of alternative communication platforms to implement integrated marketing communications (Hafsawati, 2022). Therefore, based on the results of interviews with informants, a digital marketing strategy was designed to market equivalency education at PKBM Budi Utama. Its management, it is carried out daily and contains detailed information related to the equivalency education program at PKBM Budi Utama. The marketing strategy is emphasized on the type of digital marketing where the strategy is focused on the community, or users of the digital marketing platform. This is because a user-centered marketing strategy will also have a positive impact on the company (Stoychev, 2020).

First, carry out a situation analysis, this situation analysis is better known as a SWOT analysis or Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Treat (Az zahra, Wahyudin, & Nugraha, 2021). The strategy of the situation analysis that is carried out to get the results of the current situation is a transition from conventional marketing to digital marketing. This is supported by the large number of people who use social media.

The second strategy is to make a plan that is done by determining the platform that will be used as a promotional media by considering the target to be targeted. In general, a marketing plan will be made within a period of one year. The creation of a marketing plan must lead to the vision of the institution by making strategic plans in marketing that will be implemented.

Third, the determination of the desired objectives, namely that information can be conveyed comprehensively to the community so as to create public interest and attraction. In determining objectives, leadership, entrepreneurial competence and good decisions are required by the head of the institution. The entrepreneurial competence of the head of the institution in question is in the aspects of innovation, hard work, motivation, and never giving up in determining promotional objectives competently (Gani, Badu, & Sukung, 2023).

Fourth, the marketing strategy is carried out by highlighting the achievements of the institution, the types of services provided, the facilities owned, and the activities that are often carried out. For entrepreneurs who will use the marketplace, it is advisable to focus on how to influence consumers in deciding to use the products or services presented (Kurniawan & Saputra, 2022). Thus, the marketing strategy that needs to be presented is how to influence consumers in choosing an equivalency education program.

The fifth strategy is the implementation carried out by classifying the main activities to

be promoted. For example, in skills activities carried out at PKBM Budi Utama, the manager will create interesting content about the skills that have been implemented, then upload it to several promotional media. So that the public can easily be aware of the existence of equivalency education program activities, managers implement a digital marketing strategy by utilizing print media, websites, and social media as a place to promote. Awareness of the program being held, or the product brand has an indirect effect on customer purchases (Nadhiroh & Astuti, 2022). Therefore, managers must have the right strategy to promote the program. Things that managers need to pay attention to when uploading are paying attention to the time when uploading at certain hours when many users access social media such as during lunch hours or other break times. Improving services is a major concern to facilitate teaching and learning needs and identify problems in other developments. Sixth is budget determination. The use of the above media does not require a large budget. The budget used is quite affordable and the use of social media is free of charge. Simply by completing facilities such as internet networks, computers or laptops and gadgets, the use of promotions can be carried out repeatedly for free. Expenditures are prioritized on promotions through websites, while print media has begun to be reduced in use.

The last or seventh strategy, to ensure that all digital marketing of the Budi Utama PKBM equivalency education program is running routinely, the head of the institution and the manager need to check the marketing activities that have been implemented through an evaluation strategy. The evaluation is carried out by looking at the achievement of marketing that has been implemented by looking at the public response to the equivalency education program that is being held. In addition, several complaints from the public are also taken into consideration when carrying out the evaluation. For example, it is necessary to diligently update changes to the website, especially related to contacts that can be contacted when the public needs more detailed information.

Based on the documentation results, it can be concluded that the promotional media used by the institution already includes print media, websites, and social media. Promotion using print media is carried out by including the name of the institution, programs and contact details of the institution that can be contacted. The weaknesses of the promotion from these media are that the information is less detailed, does not attract interest in reading, and the location of the information is small and marginalized, making it difficult for the public to find the information. The website of PKBM Budi Utama already contains quite complete information regarding the facilities and advantages of the equivalency education program being implemented, but the activities displayed are not the latest activities. The appearance of the website is a factor that needs to be considered by the company because the easier it is to use, the more customers will see that the company has added value (Septianingsih, 2023). In addition, the manager said that the website requires its own time to manage it because not all managers understand how to use the website, so updates to the website are very difficult to carry out routinely. This has confused some students who are looking for information through the website with contacts that can no longer be contacted. However, until now the website is still one of the effective digital marketing media in marketing the equivalency education program at PKBM Budi Utama.

Promotion through social media is carried out using social media such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp Business. Social media has the following characteristics: 1) wide reach; 2) accessibility, can be used easily by the public at low cost; 3) easy to use by anyone; 4) topicality, elicits a quick response from the public; and 5) permanent, makes it easy to edit suggestions or input from various parties. Facebook has been implemented in PKBM Budi Utama since 2023. The reason for not developing promotions on Facebook is because social media must first network with friends so that information reaches the wider community. Another reason why Facebook is still used is because it can store information on activities that have been carried out in the form of photos and descriptions that have no limits.

Other social media is promoted through Instagram. Instagram social media that can be used by everyone to share photos and videos through devices is one of the most potential promotional tools. When observed from several media, Instagram is more effective to use because it is posted more often through Instagram compared to other media. The uploads contained in the Budi Utama PKBM Instagram have shown high image resolution and bright lighting, although if observed some of the photos uploaded recently are not neatly edited like previous posts. This is because uploads on Instagram will look impressive if the uploads look natural. Based on the results of interviews with managers, it was also stated that filter effects are rarely used, because usually uploads are selected from the best photo results in terms of lighting, position and intent of the photo. This also aims to convey real information to the public so that the public is interested in the equivalency education program.

Posts on Instagram are usually accompanied by an invitation or description of achievements or activities that have been carried out. One example is a post about the success of several package C students continuing to college. With the information provided, the public will understand that by studying in equivalent education, they can continue to college, both state and private. The use of hashtags in an upload is one of the categorizations for users and managers to more easily find uploads that match their wishes. In the Budi Utama PKBM Instagram, the use of hashtags has been implemented, but the use of hashtags that is used is not yet structured. This is proven by the inconsistent use of hashtags, some hashtags with five and some others more. By having a hashtag categorization, it will make it easier for managers to upload photos or videos. In addition, many features can be used on Instagram, such as Instagram stories, Instagram reels and Instagram live. These features can be used to attract people so as to increase the number of followers by uploading content regularly.

The inclusion of WhatsApp Business on Instagram was also carried out by the management of PKBM Budi Utama. The information that has been obtained by the public will attract public interest in finding out more information related to equivalency education. Some of the information that will be asked via WhatsApp Business is related to costs, problems being experienced, and the learning process that will be carried out. Some of these problems are not conveyed in detail in Instagram uploads because they require a fairly detailed explanation based on the problems being faced. Therefore, WhatsApp Business is one of the social media that is chosen to explain the equivalency education program in detail to the public.

According to the manager's view, marketing is very effective when done digitally/online, especially through social media and websites compared to promotion through conventional media. Therefore, the manager of PKBM Budi Utama needs to maintain and improve the promotion of the equivalency education program through a digital marketing strategy.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of digital marketing strategies to promote the equivalency education program has been applied at the Budi Utama PKBM institution. The digital marketing strategy implemented at the Budi Utama PKBM is by analyzing the situation; planning digital marketing; determining goals; creating a marketing strategy; implementing digital marketing; preparing a budget; and evaluating marketing activities that have been carried out. The implementation uses print media, websites, and social media such as Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp Business. Based on the data mining results, digital marketing is very effective in promoting the equivalency education program, especially using social media such as Instagram, WhatsApp Business, and websites. The implementation of digital marketing to promote the equal education program using social media at PKBM Budi Utama needs to be carried out intensively. This means that

the period for filling content must be considered, especially at important moments to attract the interest of the wider community and with innovative and renewable content.

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