Exploring the Implementation of Digital Marketing Strategies in Non-Formal Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Marketing is one of the efforts that can be made to remain competitive with competitors, efforts to achieve predetermined goals, and respond to changes in a dynamic and competitive environment. Digitalization and the internet are changing traditional forms of marketing into modern marketing, called digital marketing. Digital marketing utilizes digital technology to reach more comprehensive online users. Non-formal educational institutions provide education, training, and development services to the community and operate as non-profit organizations. Digital marketing carried out by non-formal educational institutions in Semarang is a response to educational institutions' opportunities to show their potential to attract students or parents because of their advantages. This study uses a descriptive qualitative research approach to examine the application of digital marketing in non-formal educational institutions, including the objectives, advantages, and digital marketing media. All non-formal educational institutions in Semarang determined the study population, which amounted to 83. The entire population was included in the study sample. Data collection was carried out using observation, documentation, and questionnaire methods. The results showed that digital marketing aims to expand information on educational program services and recruit new students. Various benefits are obtained through digital marketing, such as wider and faster user reach, permanent content, and lower costs. Non-formal educational institutions in Semarang prefer using digital marketing media (free and paid) due to the growing trends and frequent use of platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Due to budget constraints, non-formal educational institutions in Semarang tend to avoid high-paying digital marketing media.

Keywords: Digital marketing, increasing public interest, media marketing, non-formal education

INTRODUCTION

As one way to achieve the entity's goals, marketing strategy plays a vital role in the industrial world, both profit-oriented and non-profit industries such as educational institutions. The determination of marketing strategies developed with the SWOT method (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) will produce the correct and optimal strategy so that it will affect the performance of the entity and its business continuity. Marketing strategy can be the foundation of an entity's overall plan to respond quickly to an ever-changing and increasingly competitive environment (Ikatrinasari et al., 2020; Shofwan et al., 2023).

Information communication technologies and social networking sites in personal life are critical and constantly evolving. The Internet provides a new environment for international marketing and creates a new

paradigm that must be considered. Based on the survey conducted by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) in 2023, it is stated that the number of internet users in 2023 will be 78.19%. This percentage is up 1.17% compared to 2022. The Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) also stated that in the distribution in the MSME and corporate sectors, the education sector obtained a percentage of 0.40%, while based on the purpose of its use as an advertising or promotional medium, 48.74% of respondents considered it very important. The survey results show that using the internet as a promotional medium is faster and can reach everyone to promote goods/services. Marketing that utilizes Internet media is called digital marketing (Cordero-Gutiérrez & Lahuerta-Otero, 2020; Peter & Dalla Vecchia, 2021) .

Digitalization has revolutionized industrial marketing with a broader concept encompassing all activities, institutions, and processes that utilize digital technology to create, communicate, and assess customers. Digital marketing provides tremendous opportunities in the business world, with a record of actual resources supporting companies in succeeding because resources are significant in a digital context. Digital marketing is increasingly widely recognized for its enormous potential to increase consumer competitiveness. The most extensive digital marketing channels are through collective websites for information sharing and social media for community building and interaction (Herhausen et al., 2020; Hagen et al., 2022).

Non-formal educational institutions are one of the educational institutions that carry out the formal education companion education process by Law No. 20 of 2003 Article 26 paragraph 3. Non-formal educational institutions help provide public services through training and community development. Non-formal education institutions offer access to alternative education services outside formal education, bridge the education gap, and provide opportunities for people who still do not have access to formal education. Non-formal educational institutions are one example of non-profit institutions in Indonesia. As a non-profit institution, non-formal educational institutions are not profit-oriented as the primary motive in serving the community.

Non-formal educational institutions must also compete with other non-formal educational institutions by offering more complex and superior educational programs. According to digital advancements, it is very influential on educational institutions, especially in marketing educational program services that are increasingly prevalent. However, the existence of digital advances provides opportunities for educational institutions to show their potential so that they can attract students or parents because of their advantages (Ishak et al., 2020; Budiarti & Mobo, 2023; Ramdhan & Gunarto, 2021). For educational institutions or organizations, due to digitalization, finding ways to manage information efficiently to attract and motivate users to continue their education by collaborating and utilizing functions on social networking sites takes much work. The marketing of educational services is carried out to plan, implement, control, and analyze educational programs formulated for the satisfaction of students involved in the academic program.

The purpose of this study is to examine the application of digital marketing in non-formal educational institutions. In particular, this study answers the following research questions: (1) What is The purpose of digital marketing in non-formal education programs? (2) What are the advantages of using digital marketing? (3) Which digital marketing media is most widely used for digital marketing in non-formal education programs? Marketing is all activities carried out by an entity to place products or services in the hands of potential customers. Marketing is one way of competing with competitors, so entities must respond more to customer needs and satisfaction. According to Dania marketing, marketing is not only related to sales and promotion but also social activities and oriented toward consumer satisfaction, needs, and desires (Dania TODOR, 2016; Sukoco, 2016).
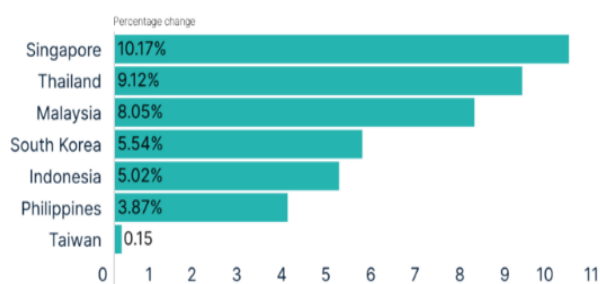
Traditional marketing is defined as money promotion activities carried out through posters, business cards, print advertisements, billboards, brochures, and other media to attract the limited attention of local consumers. Digital marketing is marketing products or services that innovatively use technology or digital devices to reach and convert prospects into customers and retain them. Digital marketing is greatly influenced by technological advancements (Dania Todor, 2016).

The concept of digital marketing was first used in the 1990s. However, between 2000 and 2010, new social and mobile tools began to emerge, which caused the concept of digital marketing to change and expand. Digital marketing is often called E-marketing, internet marketing, or online marketing. All of these terms mean

the same thing. The American Marketing Association (AMA) dictionary defines online marketing as an internet and email-based marketing campaign. The AMA dictionary also defines the term digital marketing as a digital marketing method that provides marketing communications to specific individuals via email, phone number, or through a Web browser (Fierro et al., 2017; Shelton, 2016).

Digital marketing methods such as Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Search Engine Marketing (SEM), content marketing, influencer marketing, content automation, campaigns, data-driven marketing, e-commerce, social media, email, and so on are now increasingly extending to non-internet channels that provide digital media, such as SMS and MMS and ringtones (RBT). The advancement of technology and the internet makes marketers prefer to allocate more of their budget and resources to online platforms (Desai, 2019; Cowley et al., 2021).

Table 1. *Increased Online Ad Spending in Asian Markets*

Market	Local currency		USD
Indonesia	IDR	$294,680.5 billion	$19.2 billion
Philippines	PHP	$1,024.2 billion	$18.8 billion
South Korea	KRW	$11,471.7 billion	$8.7 billion
Thailand	THB	$118.7 billion	$3.6 billion
Singapore	SGD	$2.1 billion	$1.6 billion
Malaysia	MYR	$6.5 billion	$1.5 billion
Taiwan	TWD	$26.4 billion	$0.9 billion

Source: Nielsen Ad Intel, 2022

According to Nielsen survey results, the increase in ad spending in 2022 in the Asian Market is dominated by Singapore. Indonesia experienced a rise in advertising spending by 5.02% from 2021, with the most significant ad spend value in the Asian market of $19.2 billion. Online advertising media that dominate the increase in online shopping in Indonesia are TV, internet, and print media advertisements.

Digital marketing is the most essential part of marketing. Digital marketing skills are closely related to technology, so employers want human resources who fill the digital marketing section to have hard skills in their fields. In the industrial world, the digital skills gap is still visible. This requires the world of education to be challenged to adapt to the digital skills needed in the industrial world. The industry's market demand demands that marketing science and education adapt to digitalization. Proper understanding and strategy and using human resources with skilled digital skills will be effectively used in identifying unmet needs and wants, determining the size and quantity of the identified market, and the potential profits that can be obtained (Mandal, 2017; Telli & Aydın, 2021; Katsikeas et al., 2020; Mammadova, 2023).

World marketing trends are starting to shift from conventional to digital. Marketing is more prospective because it allows potential customers to obtain various information and transact through the internet. Educational institutions must seize opportunities and immediately overcome multiple obstacles by managing marketing in the digital era to be more effective. More than traditional marketing is needed to contribute to this increasingly sophisticated era. Digital marketing should be implemented as part of a modern marketing strategy. Digital marketing allows sellers to interact with potential customers digitally to connect with more distant users. Digital marketing makes monitoring and providing prospective students' needs easier for educational institutions. Both parents and prospective students can be more independent in making decisions based on what they are looking for because they can reach communities worldwide (Purwanti et al., 2021; Astitiani et al., 2023).
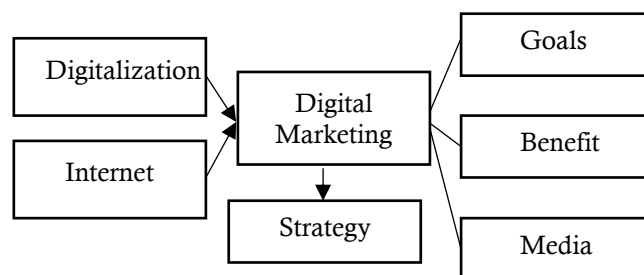
Figure 2. Conceptual Framework Study

METHOD

The research method applied in this study follows a series of stages: research design, data collection, data validity, and data analysis. First of all, the research design adopts a qualitative descriptive approach. This approach was chosen to analyze digital marketing prospects in non-formal educational institutions, focusing on the objectives, advantages, and digital marketing media used. This study analyzes digital marketing prospects in non-formal educational institutions, including the objectives, advantages, and digital marketing media used. The research population is all non-formal educational institutions in Semarang City; the number is 83 non-formal educational institutions consisting of 28 PKBM and 55-course institutions. The entire study population was a study sample. The research data were collected through observation methods, documentation, and electronic questionnaires. Observations were made to collect data related to the form of digital marketing that has been carried out, including tracing digital marketing media so that information is obtained on the extent to which non-formal educational institutions have implemented digital marketing. Documentation is done to obtain additional data such as photos, videos, or other forms as evidence of digital marketing. Electronic questionnaires are used to collect the opinions of digital marketing managers regarding the advantages and objectives of digital marketing. Electronic questionnaires are designed with Google forms as opinion questions, which are then circulated to marketing managers in each non-formal educational institution for them to fill out. Research data has been collected, reduced, classified, and then represented in pie charts to facilitate information delivery and draw conclusions of research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital marketing has emerged as a pivotal tool in transforming the landscape of education, particularly in non-formal education programs. In an era dominated by digital technologies, educational institutions increasingly leverage digital marketing strategies to enhance their outreach, engagement, and overall effectiveness. This study delves into digital marketing within non-formal education programs, aiming to dissect its implications, advantages, and challenges. By analyzing the intersection of digital marketing and non-formal education, this research sheds light on the evolving dynamics of educational promotion in the digital age.

Digital Marketing Objectives

Marketing of educational services is a program of educational institutions to increase customers (students) amid much competition. Educational institutions that are not competitive with other institutions will be abandoned by their consumers. Marketing is necessary for educational institutions to build a positive school image. The primary purpose of digital marketing in educational institutions is to introduce the educational programs they offer while attracting interest and attracting new students. However, a strategy is needed to achieve this goal so that digital marketing is carried out successfully to achieve its goals. Digital marketing strategies can be done by analyzing SWOT elements, as has been done a lot (Ramdhani et al., 2023).

Astitiani et al. (2023) argue that effective digital marketers should be able to see how every promotion they do impacts the products or services they offer. According to the marketing strategy, educational

institutions can use a focused approach with excellence so that the marketing focus highlights and markets the uniqueness of educational institutions compared to other competitors. Besides teachers' quality, the curriculum must be more prominent and flexible. Educational curriculum and innovative teaching methods are offered. Educational institutions that highlight their advantages can provide data and evidence of the success of their performance and the programs they offer to create trust and provide an overview of results to students (Budiarti & Mobo, 2023).

Marketing strategies that have been carefully planned, sound, and effective will be able to encourage the achievement of goals. The failure and ineffectiveness of marketing tools used in educational institutions will hinder the achievement of the goals that have been set and marketing management and impede the effectiveness of the institution's activities (Bratukhina et al., 2020).
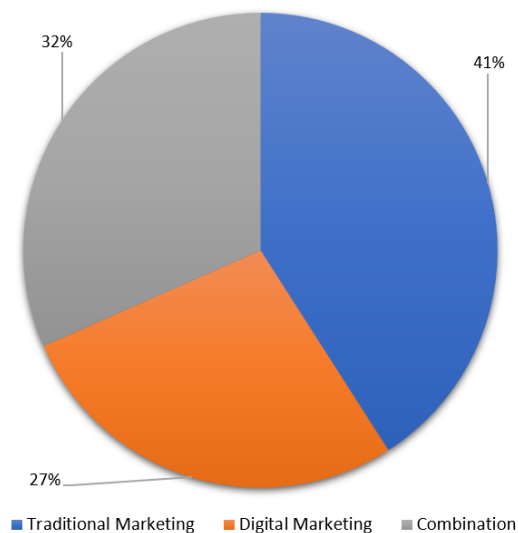

Figure 2. Type of Marketing

The survey results found that of Semarang's 83 non-formal educational institutions, as many as 41% still use traditional marketing media, most of which is through flyers and banners or banners. As many as 32% of non-formal educational institutions have begun to explore digital marketing to expand the information and reach of consumers they want. At the same time, the remaining 27% is occupied by non-formal educational institutions that have carried out marketing both traditionally and digitally in tandem.
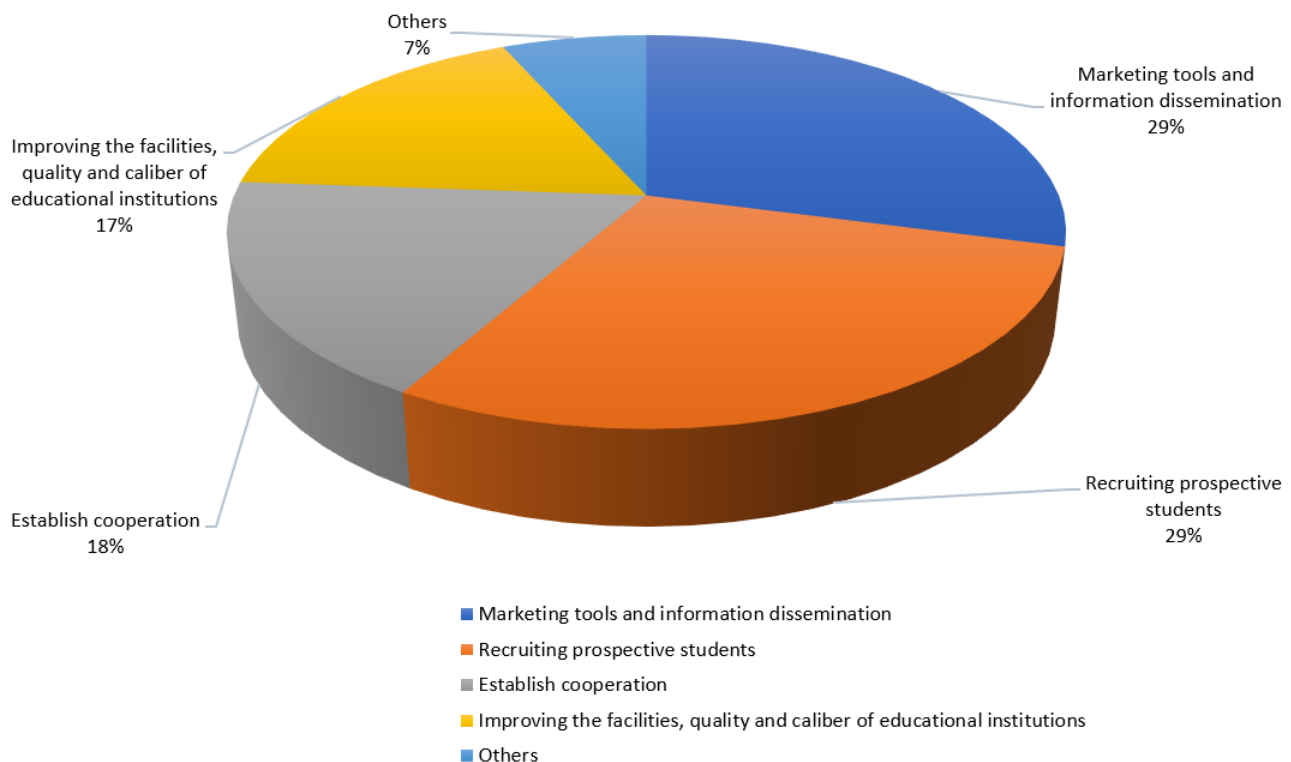
Figure 3. Digital Marketing Goals

Based on the survey results, the purpose of digital marketing carried out by non-formal educational institutions in Semarang is to promote and attract new students to continue their training, skills, or self-development education in the non-formal educational institutions they manage.

Camilleri (2019) argues that educational institutions should fundraise activities through promotion. Although educational institutions are only sometimes market-oriented, they distinguish themselves with the best results and quality of educational services. Digital marketing strategies help educational institutions target the right learners for their educational programs and reach out to others who can be part of the needs of organized educational programs (THE YEAR, 2019). It can be concluded that digital marketing in non-formal educational institutions in Semarang City aims to expand, accelerate, and facilitate access to information on non-formal education programs held to attract attention and attract new students.

Advantages of Using Digital Marketing

Digital marketing in the manufacturing industry aims to lift the brand image and products they produce to be more widely known so that their sales are expected to increase. The income they get will also increase. However, as a non-profit organization, non-formal educational institutions must be aligned with the goals of the manufacturing industry. Non-formal educational institutions, such as non-profit organizations, do not focus only on material things but also consider the impact of social activities they carry out for society in the education sector. Every stakeholder will expect the organization they manage to be sustainable, so a long process is needed to prepare. Digital marketing comes into play in the process.

Based on the results of surveys and questionnaires, it was found that digital marketing carried out by non-formal educational institutions in Semarang City has a positive effect on the sustainability of institutions, including: (1) It is more effectively used to disseminate information on educational programs because it can reach the community in a more extended scope; (2) More efficient in terms of cost, tailored to the goals and needs of marketing and media used; (3) The content presented is as diverse as videos, photos, and text. It is permanent as long as it is not deleted, unlike traditional marketing, such as banners that can only be filled with text-based content and quickly damaged; (4) It benefits students and parents looking for an educational

institution for their children so they can consider before choosing and shortening the time; (5) Improve the excellent image of educational institutions to attract cooperation with external parties.

Digital marketing is very profitable for anyone who uses it, as long as it is tailored to the purpose, content, and digital media to be more effective. Digitalization has changed the way information is delivered and perceived by viewers/information seekers. Sometimes, information conveyed through digital media needs to be more authentic and legitimate, thus creating space to mislead the public. According to research, content management is one of the marketing strategies on social media to increase engagement with potential customers. Educational organizations often focus on learners' awareness and interest, but the digi-tal marketing content needs to be more consistent and in-depth. Organizations are advised to adopt strategies to leverage advances in digital technology to raise awareness through digital platforms to continue to compete (Dhote et al., 2015; Chauhan & Pillai, 2013; Al-Thagafi et al., 2020; Fath-ul-Zam & Al-More, 2021).

Digital marketing makes it easier for educational institutions and SMEs to provide information and interact directly with consumers, expand market share, and increase awareness. Research findings reveal that digital marketing provides opportunities to cut costs, increase visibility, improve customer relationships, offer increased market reach, and improve customer convenience. Digital marketing refers to marketing that sends information in digital form and can be displayed on digital devices to promote brand image, convey brand messages, and increase product advertising sales for a manufacturing company. Digital marketing has become an indispensable part of life. Digital marketing provides a platform to renew lives and a network of potential clients who can help a business grow (Noerlina & Mursitama, 2022; Mountains and Mountains, 2020; Bhagowati & Dutta, 2018).

Research findings highlight that digital marketing significantly impacts the operational management of customer relationships in education. Digital marketing can be the best tool to reach students because most learners use the Internet. The development of digital technology allows educators to provide online-based learning to create a virtual community that can make it easier for educational institutions to promote their products. In addition to the convenience obtained, digital marketing can reduce promotional costs and effectiveness and be right on target. Digital marketing is considered to reduce marketing costs because the use of the internet today has been used for new sales channels, substitutes for personal visits, and electronic messaging alternatives (Harbi & Maqsood Ali, 2022; Hidayat et al., 2022; García et al., 2019).

It can be concluded that digital marketing positively impacts the sustainability of non-formal educational institutions in Semarang. The limited marketing costs of each non-formal educational institution can be overcome with digital marketing because it provides a free platform for promotion according to the type of digital content desired. The ef-fectiveness and efficiency of the chosen digital mar-keting can help institutions to achieve their goals more quickly. As with any finding, organizations need a deep understanding of digital marketing tools to be used more effectively (Putu et al. Wija-ya & Hasan Padmanegara, 2021).

Digital Marketing Media

Digital marketing describes integrated marketing services used to attract, engage, and convert consumers online. Digital marketing channels or media developed to date are diverse, such as content marketing, influencer marketing, SEO, social media, online advertising, email, and others. The rapid growth of digital marketing is a direct consequence of the penetration of the internet and social media sites. Digital marketing in the industry 4.0 scenario is characterized by artificial intelligence, machine learning, exploration, and extensive data extraction (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2015; Bala& Deepak Verma, 2018; Giantari et al., 2022; Sinha, 2018; Rajendran Nair & Kumar, 2021).

Social media is an integral part of digital marketing that positions an entity's products or services in the online community market. Social media can be used to develop valuable and creative content for the community on social media easily and quickly. Social media is more operational than traditional advertising, except for remote areas. Social media is a digital platform that makes it easier for users to communicate and interact through content in the form of text, photos, and videos. Today's social media is very diverse, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, X, and others, each of which has advantages. Social media can be used for digital marketing media through video content, photos, or text that provides information related to

services or products that are being informed to potential consumers (Peter & Dalla Vecchia, 2021; Tilak, 2018; Aisyah et al., 2023).
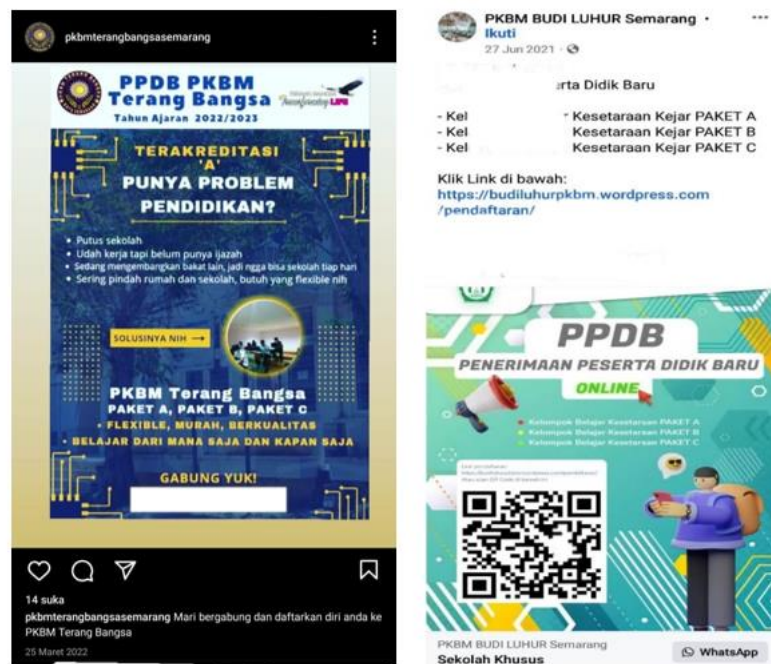

Figure 3. Examples of Digital Promotion on Social Media

The picture shows several non-formal educational institutions in Semarang that utilize social media as digital marketing. Almost all non-formal educational institutions in Semarang use social media to promote their educational services every school year. The goal is for prospective students to quickly find information about the academic program services provided and attract prospective students.

According to Prasanna Kumar et al. (2017), social media significantly impacts communication and interaction with potential clients to retain and attract new consumers. This is like what is done in educational institutions. Educational institutions have enough space to showcase their abilities on social media to attract the attention of new students. The effectiveness of digital marketing through social media is very appropriate and effective because social media has become a place for all generations to make friends. Digital marketing on social media affects the operational management of educational institutions because it can quickly respond to complaints or suggestions made by users through their social networks that are easily recognizable and have interesting content for social and academic purposes   (Sintani et al., 2021; Vicente-Ramos & Cano-Torres, 2022)

Cordero-Gutiérrez & Lahuerta-Otero (2020) found that marketing media through Facebook ads is an affordable and effective way to promote graduate education programs while engaging prospective students. Facebook ads are considered to maximize visibility, which can improve social and online positions and encourage the student recruitment process. Fierro et al. (2017) The company seeks to optimize search engines as a digital marketing strategy. An example is Google. Because it is one of the most popular and friendly search engines, it can increase the chances and profitability of the company. In addition, the company can also use paid search advertising to promote its products and services. conduct digital marketing research in higher education institutions using external websites and online portals to promote their educational programs, e.g., Wikipedia. Universities also utilize social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and Linked In to interact with prospective students (Camilleri, 2019; Wali & Andy-Wali, 2018). While the survey results were being conducted, non-formal educational institutions in Semarang City used various digital marketing media.
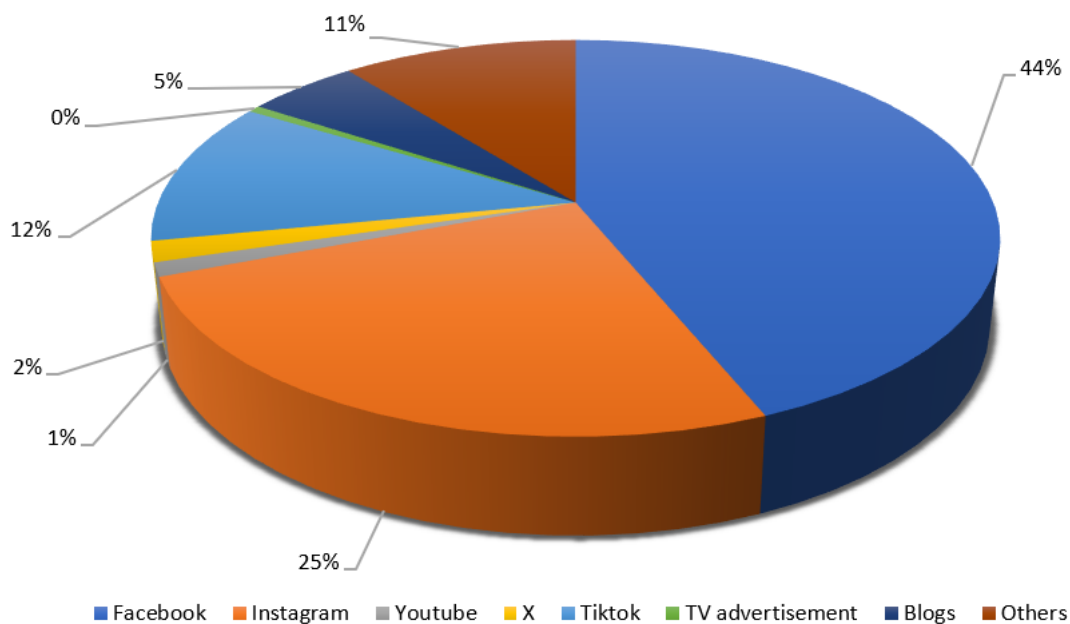
Figure 5. Variety of Digital Marketing Media

The Internet is changing the entire world, including marketing activities. The Internet is a communication platform and not a marketing tool. However, communication tools can be a medium for specific trades and transactions. Digital technology rapidly changes the environment and significantly reduces customer and seller information asymmetry. Digital technology media that can be used for marketing is no longer only used for marketing stagnant products or services but has developed into an interactive and active marketing tool. Social media can bridge customers with representatives of organizations to communicate directly related to the product being promoted, even though it is a long reach.

Meanwhile, according to (Olson et al., 2021, Kannan & Li, 2017 Ramdhan & Gunarto, 2021 Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016 Vinerean et al., 2013 THE YEAR, 2019), research findings show that marketing management in universities is also involved with digital media, which has become a business trend in the world. Students use social media more to find information about the educational institution they want before choosing. The collaborative and engaging nature of social media opens opportunities to balance educational control, as the digital platforms used for communication are built on the opinions and experiences of students.

Based on the survey results, the most widely used digital promotion media by non-formal educational institutions in Semarang are Facebook and Instagram. Both social media have the same function and offer paid promotional content that is relatively cheap. Non-formal educational institutions can do digital marketing using free or paid press according to the scope, goals, and objectives they want. Non-formal educational institutions in Semarang are more likely to choose digital marketing media, which they often use for personal use. Several other non-formal educational institutions have also begun to improve their digital marketing by following the trends of digital technology that are currently starting to develop. They must be accustomed to adjusting to the development of business environment trends and advances in digital technology to remain competitive with similar competitors. The increasing use of social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp create new opportunities for digital marketers to attract consumers through digital platforms. Increasing the popularity of educational institutions can be done by increasing the intensity of advertising on social networks and adding new content related to digitalization (Bala & Deepak Verma, 2018;   Mickiene & Valionienė, 2021)

Why are they not interested and prefer TV advertising, which is more effective for reaching a more comprehensive range of learners than other digital marketing media? They agreed to answer that limited marketing costs were an obstacle and that they chose something other than TV advertising promotion media. Their budget has not been able to reach marketing costs through TV advertising, so they prefer to allocate their budget for other paid digital marketing needs that are cheaper and more effective but can still reach a wider community than traditional print media. Then why do they not utilize digital marketing media in the form of

blogs? The reasons are diverse, but they say that the human resources in the non-formal educational institutions they manage still need the proper digital skills. Another reason mentioned is that not everyone is interested in web-based digital marketing blogs because of limited knowledge.

Research also reveals that MSMEs experience obstacles such as cultural change, limited resources or high costs, technology, and expertise in adopting higher digital marketing media. However, although the cost allocated to advertising is of great value, one cannot force consumers to rate their experience or recommend something. It also revealed that digital marketing challenges are caused due to limited digital marketing resources and capabilities as shown by poor website design, and low visibility on trending social media platforms. Ultimately all educational institutions can effectively meet the requirements of marketing skills through the adoption and integration of digital marketing (Peter & Dalla Vecchia, 2021; Machado & Davim, 2016; Mountains and Mountains, 2020; Langan et al., 2019) through the integration of digitalization of human resources with adequate digitization of organizations (Strohmeier, 2020).

This means that almost all layers of entities from all sectors experience barriers related to high marketing costs for more extensive marketing media and limited digital expertise. So, based on the survey that has been conducted, it is concluded that non-formal educational institutions in Semarang prefer digital marketing media by the trends that are currently developing and they often use.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis that has been described, it is concluded that digital marketing is beneficial for non-formal educational institutions in Semarang City in promoting the educational programs they offer to prospective students. In addition, digital marketing through social media aims to disseminate information on educational services, including activities, programs, and teaching materials, so that they can be accessed easily to capture new students. Some non-formal educational institutions in Semarang City choose to combine traditional marketing and digital marketing. The hope is that the broader coverage of people who know and can access the information conveyed, so that organizational goals can be achieved. In addition, digital marketing provides more advantages than traditional marketing. Digital marketing in addition to reaching a broader scope, can also reduce marketing costs, be more effective, and innovative to help prospective students choose educational institutions. The effectiveness and efficiency of digital marketing depend on the strategy, goals, content, and media used. Digital media that can be used as marketing media is very diverse, both paid and free. Social media is the choice of all non-formal educational institutions in Semarang City as digital marketing media because of its convenience. This research is expected to contribute to research in digital marketing at educational institutions.

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