

Research Article

Creative Marketing Strategies to Increase Interest in SDN 8 Sumberagung

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the creative marketing strategies implemented at SDN 8 Sumberagung to increase public interest in schools. Using a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method, this study collects data through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with school principals, teachers, administrative staff, as well as parent representatives and community leaders, while observations were carried out to record promotional activities carried out by the school. The data is analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, identifying key themes in the applied marketing strategy. The results of the study show that the use of social media, personal approach, and differentiation of superior programs have proven to be effective in attracting public interest. Social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook are successfully used to disseminate information with creative content, while a personal approach through home visits builds an emotional connection with parents. In addition, the environment-based learning program and practical skills provide a competitive advantage that sets SDN 8 Sumberagung apart from other schools. Overall, the study shows that creative marketing strategies tailored to local conditions can improve the school's image and the number of new student enrollees in rural environments.

Keywords: Marketing Strategies; Creative Marketing; Interest

1. INTRODUCTION

In an era of increasingly fierce educational competition, elementary schools such as SDN 8 Sumberagung face challenges to attract new students. One of the social facts that underlies the need for creative marketing strategies is the increasing awareness of parents on the importance of quality education (Hasan, 2018). Today's parents are not only looking for the nearest school, but also a school that offers excellent programs, adequate facilities, and an environment that supports children's development (Santoso & Lestari, 2020). On the other hand, the existence of private schools that offer programs based on the international curriculum and modern facilities increasingly affects the choice of parents, even in rural or semi-urban areas such as Sumberagung (Rahmawati, 2019). SDN 8 Sumberagung, as one of the state educational institutions, has its own uniqueness that can be an attraction. For example, the existence of experienced teachers, a beautiful school environment, and closeness to the local community (Yusuf, 2021). However, this potential is often underexposed to the wider community. Therefore, creative marketing strategies are essential to increase interest. One way that can be done is to use social media as a promotional platform. By disseminating information about flagship programs, school activities, and student achievements through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp, schools can reach a wider audience, including prospective parents of students who are active in digital media (Prasetyo & Widodo, 2020).

In addition, a community-based approach is also a relevant social fact. In areas like Sumberagung, interpersonal relationships are still key (Suryani, 2017). Holding community-based activities, such as educational bazaars, children's competitions, or open houses, can increase the visibility of schools. These programs also create positive experiences for the surrounding community, strengthening the image of SDN 8 Sumberagung as an educational institution that cares and is relevant to the needs of the community (Hidayat, 2021). By combining digital strategies and local approaches, SDN 8 Sumberagung can face this social challenge and attract more enthusiasts. This shows that marketing is not only about promoting products, but also creating an emotional connection between the educational institution and the community it serves (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Previous research that is relevant to the title "Creative Marketing Strategies to Increase Interest in SDN 8 Sumberagung" can be referred to from various studies related to marketing strategies in educational institutions, especially

elementary schools. For example, research by Rahmawati (2019) revealed that community-based marketing strategies, such as collaboration with students' parents and the surrounding community, are able to increase the positive image of the school so as to attract the interest of prospective students. This strategy involves various activities such as organizing open house events, inter-school competitions, or social activities involving students and the community. Another research by Widodo and Hartono (2021) highlights the importance of using digital media in educational marketing. They found that schools that actively use social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to convey information related to school excellence, student activities, and achievements that have been achieved tend to be more in demand. This digital marketing is considered effective because it can reach a wider audience at a relatively low cost. Furthermore, a study by Suryani et al. (2020) discusses other creative strategies, such as school branding programs. In his research, it was stated that excellent programs that reflect the uniqueness of the school, such as environment-based education, innovative curriculum, or special skills classes, can increase the attractiveness of the school in the eyes of prospective students and parents. This strategy is effective because it highlights the school's differentiation compared to other institutions.

In addition, research by Prasetyo (2018) shows that a personal approach through direct visits to prospective students' homes or school visits to kindergartens around the school area is a strategy that successfully increases the number of new student registrations. This approach builds an emotional connection between the school and the student's parents-to-be, which ultimately increases confidence in the quality of the school. Based on these various studies, it can be concluded that creative marketing strategies in the education sector involve a combination of digital, personal, and community-based approaches. This supports the importance of innovation in education marketing to increase public interest and trust in educational institutions, such as SDN 8 Sumberagung. The novelty of the research entitled "Creative Marketing Strategies to Increase Interest in SDN 8 Sumberagung" lies in the incorporation of technology-based, community, and personal strategic approaches that are tailored to the local characteristics of elementary schools in the region. Although previous research has discussed many creative marketing strategies in the education sector, most of them are still general and have not specifically explored the challenges and potentials in schools in rural areas such as SDN 8 Sumberagung. Therefore, this research seeks to present a new perspective by integrating methods that are adaptive to local needs and technological developments.

One of the elements of novelty is the creative use of digital technology in areas with limited access to technology. In the context of SDN 8 Sumberagung, this study can explore how simple social media such as WhatsApp can be used to the maximum to reach prospective parents of students, in addition to using traditional approaches such as personal visits. This is relevant because there have not been many studies that have explored the effectiveness of digital marketing in areas with limited technological infrastructure. In addition, the latest also lies in the local culture-based community approach. This research will explore how activities that prioritize local wisdom, such as cultural arts festivals or environment-based social activities, can be an effective marketing tool to improve the positive image of schools in the eyes of the community. This approach taps into unique local potential and is rarely the main focus in educational marketing research. This research will also highlight a personal approach with innovation, for example through the "student ambassador program," where outstanding students become school ambassadors to introduce SDN 8 Sumberagung to the surrounding community. This approach combines emotional connection with positive school imagery. By combining technology, local wisdom, and personal innovation, this research makes a new contribution in understanding creative marketing strategies that can be applied specifically in elementary schools in rural areas, so that it has a real impact in increasing the number of enthusiasts.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the research with the title "Creative Marketing Strategies to Increase Interest in SDN 8 Sumberagung" is to formulate an innovative, effective, and relevant marketing strategy with local characteristics to increase the number of new students at SDN 8 Sumberagung. The background of this goal is based on the reality that competition between educational institutions, even at the primary school level, is getting tougher, especially with the increasing presence of private schools and alternative education programs. This condition requires educational institutions such as SDN 8 Sumberagung to not only focus on the quality of learning, but also be able to market their excellence to the community creatively. This goal is also based on the argument that traditional marketing strategies, such as distributing brochures or word-of-mouth information, are often less effective in the modern era that is increasingly digital. Therefore, a more innovative approach is needed, such as utilizing social media or creating community-based programs that attract the attention of the surrounding community. This strategy is important to highlight the competitive advantages of SDN 8 Sumberagung, such as the quality of educators, excellent programs, or student achievements, which may not be known to the public if they are not actively and creatively promoted.

Furthermore, this research aims to explore the potential of local wisdom and personal approach as elements of marketing strategies. Local wisdom, such as cultural traditions or social activities typical of the region, can be used to attract the attention of the community, while personal approaches, such as home visits or direct interactions with the community, can build emotional connections and trust between the school and the student's parents. By formulating a creative marketing strategy based on innovation, technology, and locality, the purpose of this research is to provide practical solutions that not only increase the number of registrants, but also strengthen the image of SDN 8 Sumberagung as an educational institution that is superior and relevant to the needs of the community. This is expected to be able to create sustainability for SDN 8 Sumberagung in facing challenges in the education sector.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in the study "Creative Marketing Strategies to Increase Interest in SDN 8 Sumberagung" is a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was chosen to explore in depth the phenomenon of creative marketing in the context of basic education, with a focus on exploring strategies relevant to the local conditions of SDN 8 Sumberagung (Creswell, 2014). This research will use the case study method as the main design, as it can provide a holistic understanding of how creative marketing can be implemented effectively in this school (Yin, 2018). Data collection is carried out through several techniques, including in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. In-depth interviews will involve principals, teachers, administrative staff, as well as student parent representatives to gain perspectives on the marketing strategies that have been implemented and how effective they are (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In addition, interviews with community leaders and parties related to the local community will also be conducted to understand the potential and local wisdom that can be utilized in marketing strategies (Stake, 1995).

Observation was carried out to directly observe the activities carried out by SDN 8 Sumberagung in promoting the school, such as the implementation of open house programs, competitions between schools, or community-based social activities (Patton, 2002). This observation will also record the community's response to these activities. Documentation will be used to collect secondary data, such as brochures, posters, social media uploads, as well as data on the number of student enrollees in recent years (Merriam, 1998). The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. Data from interviews, observations, and documentation will be categorized based on relevant themes, such as digital, community, and personal marketing strategies (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analysis will provide a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness and innovations that can be applied to increase the number of enthusiasts at SDN 8 Sumberagung. Through this method, the research aims to formulate a creative marketing strategy that is not only in accordance with local needs, but also able to have a long-term positive impact on the image and sustainability of SDN 8 Sumberagung.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Effectiveness of Social Media as a Primary Promotional Tool

In the digital age, social media has become one of the most effective communication tools for conveying information, even in rural environments (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, in areas such as SDN 8 Sumberagung, limited access to technology is a challenge in the use of social media as a means of promotion (Creswell, 2014). Nonetheless, this study found that social media, such as WhatsApp and Facebook, can be used creatively to attract people's interest in schools (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The use of attractive visual content, such as short videos that showcase student activities or the school's flagship programs, is the main attraction for parents of prospective students (Patton, 2002). However, the effectiveness of this strategy is highly dependent on the consistency, creativity, and relevance of the content delivered (Kotler & Keller, 2016). As part of the research, an interview was conducted with Mr. Kodariyanto S.Pd. as the principal of SDN 8 Sumberagung to get a direct view on the effectiveness of the use of social media in promoting the school. Here is an excerpt from the interview:

"We are aware that in the current era, people often access information through social media. For this reason, we have started to take advantage of platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. For example, we share videos of student activities, such as competitions and other creative activities, so that parents can see firsthand the activities at school. Since we did this, many parents have started asking about our school program, even from outside the village," said the Principal of SDN 8 Sumberagung.

The results of these interviews confirm that despite limited access to technology, the use of social media with creative content has had a positive impact, both in increasing public attention to schools and in attracting the interest of prospective new students (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The findings on the use of social media at SDN 8 Sumberagung show that although access to technology is limited in rural areas, social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook can be effectively used as a marketing tool. This is in line with the theory put forward by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) which explains that social media has great potential in reaching a wider audience, including in more remote areas, at a relatively low cost. The use of short videos that showcase student activities and the school's flagship programs has successfully attracted the attention of parents of prospective students, indicating that creative visual content can have a significant impact on public interest. Content-based marketing theory also supports these findings, which state that the quality and relevance of content are essential in capturing consumers' attention. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), marketing based on engaging and consistent content can create stronger engagement between brands (in this case, schools) and their audiences. By prioritizing creativity in the presentation of content, SDN 8 Sumberagung succeeded in creating an emotional connection with the parents of prospective students, which in turn increased their interest in the school.

In addition, these findings also underscore the importance of a community-based approach in educational marketing, as explained by Mangold and Faulds (2009). Although SDN 8 Sumberagung is located in an area with limited technology, social media-based marketing strategies have proven successful in building awareness and arousing parents' trust in the quality of education offered by the school.

4.2 Advantages of a Personal Approach in Attracting Enthusiasts

In the context of education, especially in rural environments such as SDN 8 Sumberagung, a personal approach is one of the effective marketing strategies to attract the interest of prospective students. This approach involves direct interaction, such as a visit to the prospective student's home or a face-to-face discussion with parents. Research shows that this strategy is able to build a strong emotional connection between the school and the community (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In contrast to mass marketing which is general and less personal, this approach allows schools to understand parents' needs and concerns more deeply, so that they can provide specific and relevant solutions (Creswell, 2014). This strategy is particularly effective in environments that prioritize direct social interaction compared to technology-based promotions. As part of the research, interviews were conducted with Mrs. Yatik as a teacher of SDN 8 Sumberagung who was involved in the home visit program. Here is an excerpt from the interview:

"Direct visits to the homes of prospective students are one of our ways to establish good relations with the community. When we came and discussed directly with the parents, they felt valued and trusted us more. Many parents who were initially hesitant then registered their children after seeing our school's commitment," said one of the teachers of SDN 8 Sumberagung.

The results of this interview confirm that the personal approach is one of the most effective strategies to increase public trust in schools. With this strategy, SDN 8 Sumberagung can not only attract more students, but also build a close relationship with the surrounding community, which ultimately strengthens the school's positive image. Findings on the effectiveness of the personal approach at SDN 8 Sumberagung show that direct interactions, such as home visits of prospective students, can build strong emotional connections and increase parents' trust in the school. This is in line with the theory of Kotler and Keller (2016) who emphasized that relationship-based marketing is very effective in the context of education, because it can create a strong emotional bond between educational institutions and society (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In this context, the personal approach allows the school to understand the needs, expectations, and concerns of parents in more depth, which in turn allows the school to offer solutions that are more relevant and in accordance with the conditions of each family (Creswell, 2014). This research is also in line with the social marketing theory put forward by Creswell (2014), which states that in an environment that prioritizes social interaction and personal relationships, marketing that is more based on direct contact with the audience is more effective than mass marketing (Creswell, 2014). This relationship-based marketing does not only focus on sales or promotion, but rather on building long-term trust and credibility with the community (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This can be seen from the results of interviews with teachers of SDN 8 Sumberagung who revealed that after making home visits, many parents who were initially hesitant then decided to enroll their children in school (Interview, 2023). A personal approach that emphasizes direct interaction and a deeper understanding of community needs is a highly effective marketing strategy in rural areas, which can increase the interest of prospective students while strengthening the positive image of the school (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

4.3 Differentiation of Featured Programs as a Pulling Factor

One way to attract public attention to a school is to offer excellent programs that differentiate the school from other institutions. SDN 8 Sumberagung has successfully leveraged this differentiation strategy by offering environment-based

learning programs and specialized skills classes. Environment-based learning programs provide students with the opportunity to learn directly from their surroundings, which can enhance their understanding of biodiversity and the importance of preserving the environment. On the other hand, specialized skills classes provide additional practical skills for students, which are useful for their future lives. This differentiation gives SDN 8 Sumberagung a unique identity and is an important factor that attracts the attention of parents who are looking for an education that is not only academically qualified, but also equips their children with useful practical skills (Kotler & Keller, 2016). To dig deeper into the effectiveness of this flagship program, an interview was conducted with Baapak Kodariyanto S.Pd., the principal of SDN 8 Sumberagung. Here is an excerpt from the interview:

"We try to be different by offering environment-based learning programs and special skills, such as gardening and handicrafts. We want children to not only be smart in the classroom, but also be able to apply their knowledge in everyday life. Since we started this program, many parents have come and are interested in registering their children because they feel that our program can provide more value for their children's future," said the Principal of SDN 8 Sumberagung.

The results of this interview show that the differentiation of SDN 8 Sumberagung's flagship program, which combines academic education with practical skills, has succeeded in attracting the interest of parents and making this school increasingly attractive as an educational choice. The findings regarding the success of SDN 8 Sumberagung in attracting parents' interest through a superior program that differentiates this school from other institutions shows the importance of differentiation strategies in education marketing. The environment-based learning program and special skills offered by this school provide significant added value for students and parents. This is in line with Kotler and Keller's (2016) theory regarding product differentiation in marketing, which states that companies or institutions that offer unique features or services can build a strong identity in the market. In this context, SDN 8 Sumberagung has managed to develop an identity that sets it apart from other schools by emphasizing teaching that is not only academic, but also practical skills relevant to daily life, such as gardening and handicrafts (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

According to constructivist learning theory, as put forward by Piaget and Vygotsky, hands-on experience through environment-based activities can improve students' understanding and skills (Piaget, 1950; Vygotsky, 1978). By providing opportunities for students to learn directly from the surrounding nature and develop practical skills, the school provides a more holistic and relevant experience, which can increase parents' interest in enrolling their children. This can be seen from interviews with school principals who revealed that many parents are interested in programs that provide more value for their children's future. The differentiation of flagship programs that combine academic education with practical skills not only improves the quality of education at SDN 8 Sumberagung, but also helps the school build a strong reputation in the eyes of the community and parents (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Piaget, 1950; Vygotsky, 1978).

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the marketing strategy implemented by SDN 8 Sumberagung has succeeded in utilizing various approaches to attract public interest in this school. The three main strategies discussed, namely the use of social media, a personal approach, and the differentiation of flagship programs, have proven to be effective in building strong relationships with the community and increasing parents' trust in the quality of education offered by schools. First, despite limited access to technology in rural areas, SDN 8 Sumberagung has successfully used social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook to convey information about school activities and flagship programs through creative content, especially videos. This is in accordance with the theory of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) which explains the great potential of social media in reaching a wider audience at a low cost. Second, the personal approach carried out through home visits of prospective students is effective in building emotional relationships between the school and parents, in accordance with the theory of Kotler and Keller (2016) regarding relationship-based marketing, which can increase the trust and credibility of the school. Third, the differentiation of superior programs that combine environment-based learning with practical skills classes has succeeded in creating a unique identity that distinguishes SDN 8 Sumberagung from other schools. The program not only provides academic knowledge, but also practical skills relevant to daily life, such as gardening and handicrafts, which are increasingly of interest to parents of prospective students. Overall, the combination of social media utilization, a personal approach, and the differentiation of featured programs not only increased the number of new student enrollments, but also strengthened the school's positive image in the eyes of the public. These strategies show that educational marketing in rural settings can be done effectively despite challenges in terms of access to technology, provided that it uses an approach that suits the characteristics and needs of the local community.

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