

Diversification Strategies in Private School Marketing: Efforts to Increase Competitiveness in the Digital Era

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Received: 18-12-2024

Revised: 07-06-2025

Accepted: 09-11-2025

Info Artikel

Abstract

Keywords:

Diversification,
School Marketing, Digital
Media, Private Schools,
Promotion Strategy.

This study analyzes the implementation of diversification-based marketing strategies at Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen Semarang to strengthen the institution's attractiveness and sustainability amidst the increasing competition in the private school sector. The research uses a qualitative case study approach with data triangulation through interviews, observations, and internal document reviews. The results show that although the school has developed flagship programs such as the Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS), the integration of the STEM curriculum, and bilingual classes supported by facilities such as national standard science laboratories and modern dormitories, the use of digital media for promotion is still very limited. A surprising finding emerged when the majority of prospective students learned about the school not through online media, but rather through word-of-mouth or by chance, indicating a systemic failure in the implementation of digital marketing strategies. Furthermore, the involvement of alumni and the community in school promotions is also minimal. The practical contribution of this research is the importance of transformation in school marketing management, including training the promotion team, integrating the use of big data into digital strategies, and activating alumni and community networks as promotional agents. This study confirms that excellent educational programs, without the support of an adaptive and optimal marketing system, will not be able to maximize their potential, causing the existing programs to remain relatively unknown and not maximally influencing prospective students' interest.

Kata Kunci:

Diversifikasi,
Pemasaran Sekolah,
Media Digital, Privasi
Sekolah, Strategi Promosi

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis penerapan strategi pemasaran berbasis diversifikasi di SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Mijen Semarang untuk memperkuat daya tarik dan keberlanjutan institusi di tengah persaingan yang semakin ketat di sektor sekolah swasta. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif dengan triangulasi data melalui wawancara, observasi, dan tinjauan dokumen internal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun sekolah telah mengembangkan program unggulan seperti Sekolah Asrama Muhammadiyah (MBS), integrasi kurikulum STEM, dan kelas bilingual yang didukung dengan fasilitas seperti laboratorium sains berstandar nasional dan asrama modern, pemanfaatan media digital untuk promosi masih sangat terbatas. Temuan mengejutkan muncul ketika mayoritas calon siswa mengetahui tentang sekolah ini bukan melalui media online, tetapi lebih sering melalui informasi lisan atau secara kebetulan, yang menunjukkan adanya kegagalan sistemik dalam penerapan strategi pemasaran digital. Selain itu, keterlibatan alumni dan komunitas dalam promosi sekolah juga masih minim. Kontribusi praktis dari penelitian ini adalah pentingnya

transformasi dalam manajemen pemasaran sekolah, yang meliputi pelatihan tim promosi, integrasi penggunaan big data dalam strategi digital, dan pengaktifan jaringan alumni serta komunitas sebagai agen promosi. Penelitian ini mengonfirmasi bahwa program pendidikan yang unggul tanpa dukungan sistem pemasaran yang adaptif dan optimal tidak akan dapat memaksimalkan potensi yang ada, sehingga program-program yang ada cenderung tidak dikenal dan tidak mempengaruhi daya tarik calon siswa secara maksimal.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing in the education sector has become an increasingly important issue over time. In this highly competitive era of globalization, the education sector no longer only prioritizes the quality of teaching or curriculum alone. Increased competition among schools, both private and public, forces educational institutions to develop effective marketing strategies to attract students and parents (Abdillah Mundir, 2016). Marketing in private schools, in particular, is becoming increasingly relevant as they face considerable challenges in maintaining their viability and increasing their attractiveness amidst the increasing number of public schools offering free education. Especially in private schools, this is increasingly relevant amid growing competition and shifting global trends. (Alya Fatma Hadi, Fatimah Az-Zahra, & Nadiya Salsabila, 2023). In a competitive educational environment, private schools are not only faced with the need to offer quality educational services. However, they must also be able to attract students and parents through innovative marketing strategies. (MY, Savitri, & Oktorita, 2022) A business's marketing strategy is influenced by demand and supply factors. (Varadarajan, 2010). This trend aligns with the global need to establish educational institutions that are adaptive, value-added, and responsive to the community's needs. (Sholeh, 2020).

Diversification of educational products has been recognized as an effective strategy to expand market reach and increase the attractiveness of schools. However, the term "diversification" is commonly used in the industrial world. (Sholeh, 2020). The concept involves the development of unique programs designed to meet the diverse preferences of students and parents, such as bilingual programs, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) curricula, and religious values-based educational services. In this context, Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen Semarang faces significant competition challenges with surrounding schools, including public schools that offer free education fees. To stay relevant and competitive, the school has adopted a diversification-based marketing strategy that aims to increase public appeal and trust. To market education effectively, the plan must recognize that education must be accessible and meet the diverse needs of students. (Sari, Ginanjar, & Heriyansah, 2020).

Nowadays, there is a very tight competition between public schools and *madrasah* (religious) (Sarifudin & Maya, 2019). Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen also faced fierce competition from other educational institutions in its area. The school competes with other schools that offer a variety of advantages, including free tuition, modern facilities, and a technology-based approach to education. In addition, although Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen has offered diverse programs, such as boarding classes (MBS) and STEM programs, student admissions for these programs are still low. Also, social media, Facebook, Instagram, and websites have been used as promotional tools; the results have not had a significant impact on the increase in the number of new students, although there is an increase, but it is still small, especially for new programs such as Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS). This phenomenon highlights the need to gain a deeper understanding of the implementation and effectiveness of diversification-based marketing strategies in this school.

Digital-based marketing implemented by schools is still experiencing limitations. Social media platforms (such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube) and school websites have been operational. However, they have not been utilized optimally, both in terms of content frequency and the quality of interaction with the audience. This causes a lack of public awareness of the excellent programs offered. Additionally, the involvement of local communities, alumni, and parents in supporting school marketing remains minimal. These barriers raise questions about the extent to which diversification-based marketing strategies in these schools can be optimized to achieve the desired results.

Studies on marketing management in the education sector have been conducted extensively, particularly in relation to optimizing digital promotion and developing a comprehensive marketing mix. However, most of the research focuses on established higher education institutions or schools in the global market. (Adhitya, Zumaeroh, & Winarto, 2022) which discusses the effectiveness of product diversification in the education business, but highlights its impact on higher education institutions. Research exploring diversification-based marketing strategies in private secondary schools, particularly those with a religious affiliation, such as Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen, has not been found. Additionally, the literature exploring the integration of diversification with digital marketing strategies in the context of local education is also limited. Most studies only briefly address diversification in general, without discussing how these strategies are applied to address specific challenges, such as competition with public schools or resource constraints in small private schools. Digital marketing strategies can increase visibility with a broader and more effective target audience. (Wiyasa & Supriyadi, 2024).

This research aims to fill this gap by providing empirical insights into the implementation of diversification in marketing management within the private secondary education sector. This study also offers a holistic approach that includes aspects of planning, implementation, and evaluation of diversification-based marketing strategies. This research not only makes an academic contribution but also offers practical solutions to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of educational institutions in an era of increasingly complex competition. With a focus on the local context in Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen, this study provides a concrete example of how diversification-based marketing strategies can be implemented and evaluated in an educational environment.

METHOD

This research employed a descriptive case study design with a qualitative approach. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The design was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of diversification-based marketing strategies at Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen Semarang. Data sources included both primary and secondary data to provide a comprehensive view of the phenomenon. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including the school principal, marketing staff, teachers, parents, and students, who served as the primary subjects of the study.

Qualitative data analysis in this study was conducted through three main stages. The first stage is data reduction, which involves simplifying and organizing raw data using techniques such as coding and grouping to facilitate analysis. The second stage is data presentation, where information is conveyed visually or descriptively through tables, graphs, diagrams, or narratives to enhance clarity and understanding. The third stage is conclusion drawing and verification, which

entails interpreting the data to identify patterns or findings and validating them through methods such as triangulation and discussions with relevant stakeholders.

To enhance the accuracy and depth of analysis, qualitative analysis software like NVivo was utilized. NVivo supports researchers in managing large volumes of data, coding textual information, identifying emerging themes, and generating visual representations such as concept maps and relationship diagrams. (Dhakal, 2022). The validity and reliability of the data were ensured through several strategies, including triangulation of data sources by comparing interviews, observations, and documentation; peer debriefing to maintain objectivity in interpretation; and maintaining an audit trail that records the entire research process, including analytical decisions and revisions. (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

Table 1. The Interview Guidelines

Informant Category	Key Questions	Information Purpose
Principal	1. How are the planning and objectives of the diversification-based marketing strategy in this school 2. What are the indicators of success	Understand the school's strategic vision and marketing policy direction
Marketing Staffs	1. What promotional strategies have been carried out to support the school's flagship program 2. What are the challenges faced?	Identify field practices and barriers to the diversification program promotion
Teachers	1. What is your role in the implementation of the MBS/STEM/Bilingual program 2. How do students respond to the program?	Obtain the views of academic executives on the success of the flagship program
Student Parents	1. What are your reasons for choosing this school for your child 2. Does digital promotion influence your decision?	Capturing consumer (market) perceptions of school marketing programs and strategies
Students	1. What do you think about the MBS/ STEM / bilingual program 2. How was your experience in participating in school promotion activities	Deep dive into the first-hand experience of the beneficiaries of the featured program

Source: Data Collection, 2025

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

School Marketing Strategy Planning

The results of the study indicate that marketing planning at Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen is conducted through systematic steps, although there are some limitations to its implementation. Planning involves analyzing the needs of local communities, mapping market potential, and developing flagship programs, such as Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS), STEM programs, and bilingual classes.

Table 2. Flagship Program of Muhammadiyah 8 Mijen Junior High School

Program	Description	Target Market
Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS)	Dormitory-based education with a focus on tahfidz and Islamic character.	Parents of religious students seeking a faith-based education.
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics-based curriculum.	Students interested in modern academics.
Bilingual Class	Bilingual learning program (Arabic and English).	Families who want their children to master a foreign language

Source: Data from Field Object, 2024

This planning is done so that the marketing work to be carried out can be adjusted to the capabilities of both financial (*funds*) and non-financial (*human resources*) resources, given the limited capabilities of both. The strategies designed by the school, taking into account various factors, are illustrated in the following visualization. The results of an interview with the principal, Mrs. Sri Handayani, S. Pd. She said as follows:

Before the implementation of new student admissions, we (the principal and the education department) hold an internal meeting, then hold a meeting at the end of each year, and all the teachers are involved in the meeting. This meeting is held to determine the school promotion team. The core committee consists of the chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and teachers in this school."

Figure 1. A visualization diagram about school marketing planning.

Source: Data Collection, 2024

This visualization offers a clearer view of the school's marketing planning framework, encompassing factors such as market segmentation, promotional strategies, competitiveness, institutional engagement, and diversification. Different colors help separate each category, making it easier to distinguish between them.

Although these programs are designed to meet the needs of diverse market segments, the results of interviews with principals and teachers revealed that market analysis has not targeted segments with an optimal digital approach. The flow chart below outlines the planning steps undertaken in school marketing planning, including market needs analysis, identification of superior programs, determination of promotional strategies, preparation of promotional materials, and implementation of promotions.

Market needs analysis is the initial stage where the needs and preferences of the market, as well as prospective students and parents, are analyzed to understand the opportunities and challenges in marketing. Identification of excellent programs, based on the analysis results, enables schools to pinpoint programs that can serve as the main attraction, such as academic programs, extracurricular activities, or school facilities. In this step, determining the promotion strategy involves preparing an effective strategy to promote the flagship program. This strategy can include the use of social media, websites, or direct promotional activities. After the strategy is established, promotional materials such as brochures, videos, or digital content are prepared to convey marketing messages clearly and attractively.

The implementation of promotion, in the final stage, involves executing promotional activities based on a planned strategy, aiming to attract the interest of prospective students and enhance the school's image. The following forms of school promotion include Instagram and YouTube. The relationship between factors such as direct promotion (open house, roadshow, brochures, and leaflets), digital marketing (school website, social media, email marketing), and promotional *events* (*regular recitation, sharing ta'jil, and social activities*). This visualization helps illustrate how various marketing approaches impact the overall marketing implementation of the school.

Through direct observation in the school environment, several marketing strategies have been implemented at SMP Muhammadiyah 8, including both online social media and print media. However, these strategies have not been fully maximized in their promotion, resulting in limited reach to various elements of society.

Figure 2. Promotional Media of Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen Semarang



The marketing organization at Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen involves the formation of a marketing team comprising teachers, administrative staff, and school principals. This team is responsible for developing promotional strategies, including the utilization of digital media and print materials. The results of interviews and internal documents show that the coordination between the marketing team and the curriculum development team has not been optimal. For example, even though the curriculum has been tailored to the flagship program, promotions often do not highlight the program's specific strengths.

Table 3. Marketing Team Task Division

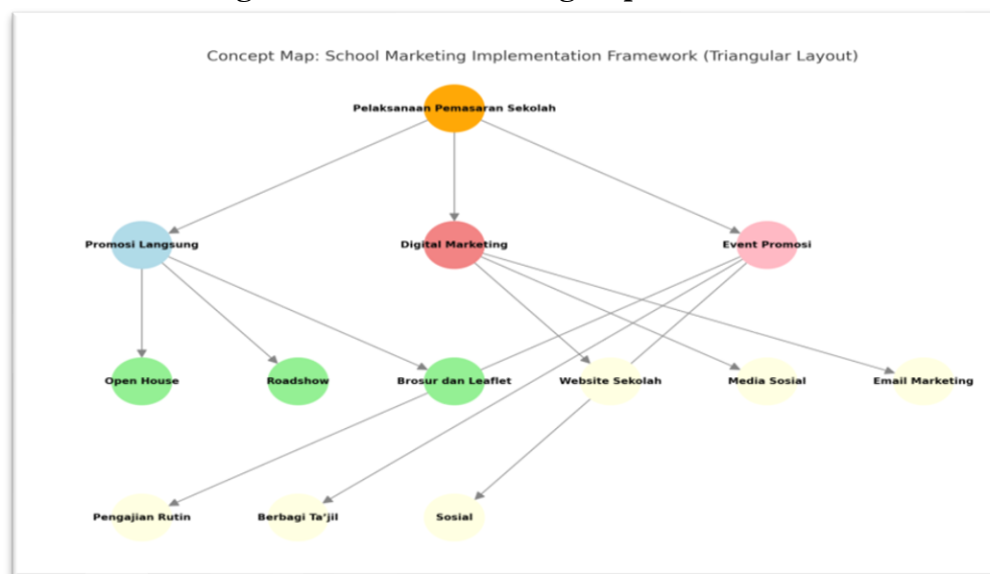
Position	Main Tasks	Constraints
Principal	Determine policy and budget allocation	More focus on the administrative aspect
Teacher	Helping with promotional implementation	Additional workload and teaching
Public Relations Staff	Managing and designing social and print media	Lack of digital marketing training

Source: Data Collection, 2024

Implementation of School Marketing Strategy

The promotional media used in the marketing strategy at Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen uses a combination of digital and print media. Social media such as Instagram and Facebook are used to share information about featured programs and school activities. However, data from observations shows that the number of interactions on social media is still low, with an average of only 50-100 likes per post. Print media, such as brochures and banners, are used to reach the local community, particularly in the vicinity of the school.

The Direct Promotion Program is implemented through activities such as the Open House, which provides prospective students and parents with the opportunity to see the school's facilities firsthand. *Second*, the Roadshow involves visiting local elementary schools to introduce superior programs. However, the number of students in the regular program shows an increasing trend, while the boarding program is a new initiative, introduced as a result of diversification from Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen for the 2024/2025 school year. This indicates that the marketing efforts undertaken by Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) have not been successful.

Figure 3. School Marketing Implementation

Source: Analytical Data Processing from GPT's. ai MRC

This diagram illustrates the relationship between various factors, including direct promotion (open houses, roadshows, brochures, and leaflets), digital marketing (school websites,

social media, and email marketing), and promotional events (routine recitations, *ta'jil* sharing, and social activities). This visualization helps illustrate how various marketing approaches impact the overall marketing execution of the school. Interview with the principal, School marketing is the most in demand by prospective students or students who have joined, he replied:

"Roadshow to elementary schools and presentations by displaying the vision, mission, and profile of the school while giving brochures to prospective students. This is the most popular approach."

In addition, Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen implements a holistic approach to increase schools' competitiveness in the education market, creating valuable experiences for all parties involved, and achieving sustainable growth. Here is a picture of holistic marketing

Evaluation and Control of School Marketing Strategies

The evaluation is carried out through regular meetings to assess the effectiveness of the school's marketing strategy. Data from observations and interviews revealed that the overuse of social media has helped increase local awareness of the existence of schools. Meanwhile, promotions such as brochures are effective for conveying specific information, as they are easier to see directly and less expensive. Meanwhile, the lack of feedback from the community and prospective students is minimal, making it difficult to measure the success of the flagship program. There is no integrated monitoring mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of digital promotion.

Meanwhile, school marketing control is based on diversification at Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen. The Principal said that as a principal, I emphasize the importance of marketing control to ensure that the strategies implemented can run optimally. We ensure that the use of digital platforms, such as school websites and social media, is continually updated and utilized to their maximum potential.

That way, information about the school's flagship programs, such as boarding and STEM programs, can be accessed by prospective students from various regions. The school continues to monitor and evaluate this digital reach in order to reach a wider audience.

Table 4. Evaluation of School Marketing Strategy

Indicators	Achievements	Information
Number of New Registrants	Regular classes are increasing, while Boarding classes have not.	Boarding needs intensive and creative promotion.
Social media interactions	Low	Digital strategy is not optimal.
Parent and alumni participation	Currently	Participation is only in an administrative form.

Source: Data Collection, 2024

DISCUSSION

Diversification Strategy of Marketing Strategy

The program diversification strategy implemented by SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Mijen is a form of innovation aimed at reaching a broader education market, including non-community Muhammadiyah members. This aligns with Philip Kotler's concept, which emphasizes the importance of marketing management in creating unique value in the eyes of consumers. However, implementation in the field shows that there are obstacles in segmentation and targeting that are

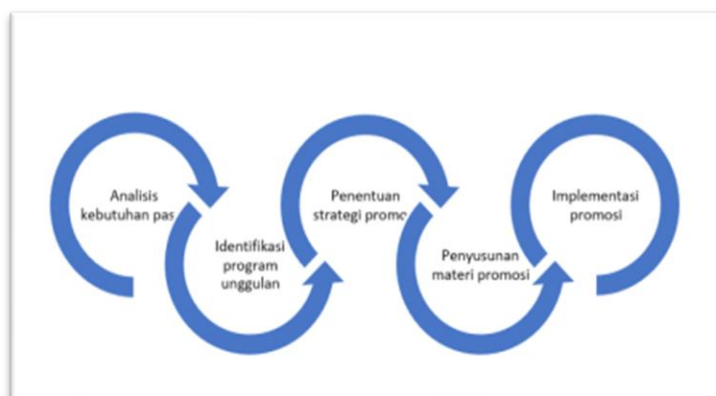
less effective. (Prastowo & Manunggal, 2022). This shows the weakness of the integrated marketing communication (IMC) approach, which should synergize promotion, interpersonal communication, and digital in attracting market interest. IMC emphasizes message consistency across different media and touchpoints with consumers. The inconsistency between product diversification and promotional strategies creates a gap between program value and market perception. (Azwanda, Sindo, & Andriani, 2025; Prastiyo, 2023).

This diversification strategy has great potential to attract the interest of prospective students; the role of marketing management can optimize this strategy so that it meets expectations, but in reality, it has not achieved its full potential. One of the main challenges faced is the lack of targeted and integrated promotions that can target a broader market segment, including non-Muhammadiyah communities. Research indicates that a well-crafted marketing strategy can significantly contribute to the success of educational institutions. (Kotler & Fox, 1985). Therefore, to strengthen the diversification results, it is important for MBS to improve its marketing strategy as for the recommended marketing strategies.

The effective use of digital media and social media. In the digital era, social media and online platforms have a crucial role in promoting educational institutions. MBS can utilize social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to showcase the excellence of student programs and activities. (Shields, 2018) shows that the strategic use of social media can increase school visibility, besides attracting the attention of prospective students and parents. School marketing can increase the number of prospective students and enhance an institution's positive image in the eyes of the public (Eckhardt et al., 2019).

Collaboration with alumni and community networks. Alumni are a valuable potential marketing resource. They can serve as ambassadors for schools and help expand the reach of promotions, primarily through their testimonials and personal experiences. Building a strong alumni network and involving them in school activities can be an effective strategy in improving the school's image. (Hilendria, Junaidi, Effendi, & Astuti, 2019; Rumsanah, Tarihoran, Djabidi, Gunawan, & Hanafi, 2025). In addition, cooperation with the Muhammadiyah community in various regions can expand the pool of prospective students interested in the concept of religion-based and academic education.

Figure 4. Analysis Marketing Flow



Teachers at Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen strongly support the school's efforts in controlling promotions. Teachers' activeness in creating digital content, such as videos of student activities, teacher testimonials, and student achievement results, such as trophies that are neatly arranged in front of the principal's office, which are then uploaded to the school's social media (Suandita, Maharani, & Kholik, 2025). Thus, prospective students and parents can see

firsthand the positive activities carried out at school. Teachers also frequently interact with prospective students through digital platforms to answer questions about registration and educational programs at the school. (Izmala, Yusufriah, Meilisa, & Iskandar, 2025; Putri, Zakia Ulfa, Alwi, & Syam, 2025).

The final sub-plan outlines how to build support for a school to implement its strategy successfully. Although I have called this a marketing plan, it is more accurately a promotional plan, as the marketing component, identifying what clients want in the future, has been integrated into the strategy formation process. (Fidler, 2002). Thus, the primary activity is promoting the school's public image and mobilizing support. This will need a plan of activities, both externally and internally. (Maulidi, Eviyanti, Zohriah, & Djabidi, 2024; Wahyudi & Marzuki, 2025).

The Importance of Diversification in Improving School Competitiveness

Diversification of educational products, such as those implemented by SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Mijen through the Muhammadiyah Boarding School (SBM) program, STEM, and bilingual classes, is a strategic step in facing increasingly fierce competition. This strategy aligns with previous research, which suggests that product diversification can enhance the attractiveness of schools to prospective students and parents. (Adhitya et al., 2022). However, despite the diversification that has been implemented, the results show that the attractiveness of programs like MBS remains low. This weakness is primarily due to the lack of a targeted promotional strategy and a weak integration between the marketing team and the curriculum team. The promotions carried out have not effectively highlighted the uniqueness or excellence of each flagship program, resulting in minimal public awareness of programs such as MBS.

In addition, diversification of educational products also provides an opportunity for schools to build a stronger and more distinct identity compared to other schools. By offering various flagship programs such as STEM, bilingual classes, and SBM, the school can attract students with various interests and needs. (Zalsa, Fitri, Nurdin, Shita, & Ramadaniah, 2025). This is important as current educational trends are increasingly focusing on providing a more comprehensive learning experience that is relevant to technological developments and the needs of the workforce. This diversification enables schools to adapt to the demands of globalization and enrich their curriculum with more innovative and practical approaches. (Mustofiyah, Rahmawati, & Ghufon, 2024).

However, the success of program diversification is not only determined by the variety of products offered, but also by how these programs are communicated to the broader community. Without effective promotions and appropriate marketing strategies, the programs' advantages will not be maximized in attracting the attention of prospective students and parents. Therefore, schools need to evaluate and refine their promotional strategies to effectively showcase the benefits of each program and enhance public awareness. Thus, schools can strengthen their competitiveness in this increasingly competitive education market. (Sirait, Prasetya, & Amini, 2023).

Digital Media Optimization in Marketing Strategy

The use of social media aligns with digital communication theory. (Shields, 2018), which states that schools can build brand identity through consistent digital content. However, weaknesses in the intensity and quality of uploads indicate a lack of a digital content strategy. School visibility is strongly influenced by positive narratives built through testimonials and visual storytelling on social media. The use of digital marketing in the education sector requires a creative

approach that is content-based, participatory, and engagement-driven. This lack of strategy explains why the conversion rate of prospective students remains low, despite the presence of digital media. (Hendrawati, 2025; Puspitasari, Widiarti, & Subali, 2025).

In the digital era, social media and online platforms play a key role in building the visibility and reputation of schools. (Shields, 2018). The findings show that Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen has utilized social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook; however, the frequency and quality of uploaded content remain limited. The low level of engagement on these platforms indicates the need for a more creative and relevant content strategy to reach a wider audience. Increase the frequency of uploading content that displays the excellence of superior programs, student and parent testimonials, and documentation of school activities. Utilize interactive features on social media, such as polls, live streams, and Q&A sessions, to enhance audience engagement. Apply an SEO (Search Engine Optimization) approach to the school website to increase visibility on search engines. (Navarrete, Nehring, Schanze, Ewerth, & Hoppe, 2025).

Additionally, digital media optimization involves utilizing other platforms, such as YouTube, TikTok, and LinkedIn, to expand audience reach. Platforms such as YouTube and TikTok have great potential to reach younger audiences, especially with creative and engaging visual content. Schools can create short videos that depict life on campus, extracurricular activities, and the excellence of their flagship programs. Thus, the content presented will be more relatable and can build an emotional connection with prospective students and parents. This aligns with research indicating that digital audiences are increasingly seeking authentic and engaging visual content (Timotheou et al., 2023).

It is important to utilize social media analytics to monitor the performance of posted content. By using analytics data, schools can more easily identify the types of content that get the most attention and interaction from audiences. A better understanding of audience preferences will allow social media managers to create more targeted and more effective content strategies. Additionally, utilizing paid ads on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram can be an effective strategy to increase the school's visibility, particularly to the target audience. (Huang et al., 2024).

School website optimization is a crucial component of a comprehensive digital marketing strategy. In addition to improving SEO, schools need to ensure that their websites are responsive and easily accessible on various devices, including smartphones. This is particularly important given the high prevalence of mobile devices used to access information. (Mutalib, Mohamed, & Tosho, 2025). Additionally, an informative website with easy navigation will enhance the user experience and encourage users to stay longer, interacting with the provided content. By continually updating the website with the latest information on school programs, activities, and achievements, the school can establish a more credible and professional image in the eyes of the public. (Alkufahy, Daoud, Alghizzawi, & Alfityani, 2025).

Alumni and Community Engagement in School Marketing

The involvement of alumni and communities as promotional agents is highly relevant to *word-of-mouth* marketing and social capital theory, where social networks can strengthen the image of educational institutions. The weakness in this school seems to lie in the unstructured alumni network and the lack of a systematic community-based promotion program. (Mustofa, 2022) states the importance of community and parent synergy in supporting education. The failure to build

solid partnerships indicates the potential for underutilized stakeholders in the school marketing system.

Alumni are a vital asset in shaping a positive image of the school. Their experience can be an authentic and engaging testimonial for prospective students and parents. (Rusyanti, Arafat, & Destiniar, 2021). In addition, collaboration with local communities and Muhammadiyah networks can expand the school's marketing reach. Form an active alumni forum and involve them in promotional activities, such as seminars or open houses. Utilize the network of Muhammadiyah communities in various regions to expand the market. Host community-based activities, such as social services or joint recitations, to increase community involvement. The importance of collaboration with parents and communities in supporting education, academically so that schools can know the development of students. In addition, to expand the school's marketing reach.

A Holistic Approach in School Marketing

A holistic marketing approach is a comprehensive effort to integrate all communication channels, both online and offline. However, the imbalance between channels leads to suboptimal promotional effects. (Rahmah, 2022) emphasized the importance of strategic alignment between face-to-face and digital promotions to produce branding synergy. In the holistic marketing approach (Kotler, P. & Keller, 2013), cross-functional coordination is required to build a strong perception. The findings indicate that the school has not fully implemented a synchronized and integrated approach between offline activities and digital media.

A holistic approach that includes direct promotion, digital, and community involvement has been implemented by Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen. However, the effectiveness of this approach still needs improvement. For example, while open houses and roadshows have been successful in attracting the interest of prospective students, digital promotion has not fully supported this success. Integrate direct promotion strategies with digital strategies to create synergistic effects. (Syafira, Suhairi, Wulandari, Iswanti, & Fauzi, 2023). For example, document roadshow or open house activities and share them on social media. Involve all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and students, in supporting promotional efforts. (Rahmah, 2022). Promotion can also take the form of extracurricular activities and student habit formation, which are then documented by the school and disseminated through social media, as in the character development of students.

Character development, the main product at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Mijen, can be analyzed through extracurricular programs and habituation activities that have been implemented. Both play an important role in shaping students' behavior, values, and character. Marketing strategy evaluation is a crucial component of the marketing performance management cycle. The finding that monitoring mechanisms are weak indicates that *key performance indicators* (KPIs) specific to digital channels have not been implemented. This weakens the iterative process of marketing strategy improvement. Without a data-driven decision-making system, schools will struggle to make real-time improvements. The absence of a feedback loop makes the marketing process unresponsive to market dynamics.

Evaluation and marketing control at Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen must be carried out continuously to ensure the effectiveness of the implemented strategies. The findings indicate that monitoring mechanisms remain limited, particularly in evaluating the effectiveness of digital promotions. Use specific metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of your digital promotion, such as the number of clicks, likes, shares, and conversions from social media to sign-ups

(Manembu, Tawas, & Dotulong, 2024). Conduct regular surveys of new students and parents to understand the factors that influence their decision to choose a school. Update marketing strategies based on the results of evaluations and inputs from various parties. (Atiko, Sudrajat, & Nasionalita, 2016).

In an effort to increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Mijen, this research identifies various aspects that become the primary focus in the marketing strategy based on product diversification. This research not only discusses marketing theories that have been proven effective, such as the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) theory (Philip Kotler, 1995) and digital marketing (Shields, 2018), but also analyzes the practices applied in the field. The research findings revealed several significant gaps, including the lack of synergy between promotion and program innovation, the limited utilization of social media to its full potential, and the less-than-optimal role of alumni and communities in school promotion. Additionally, the evaluation and control of marketing strategies remain limited, with measurements that lack sufficient data. Therefore, this research offers the novelty of combining various marketing elements, such as product diversification and community-based marketing, to create a more integrative marketing approach. The following table summarizes the findings, gaps, and novelty of this research, providing deeper insights into the development of effective school marketing strategies.

Table 5. Discussion Summary

Research Findings	Theoretical Analysis	Contribution and Novelty
Implementation of a diversification strategy through flagship programs such as MBS, STEM, and bilingual classes	Product diversification as a marketing strategy to create unique value for consumers, according to Kotler's marketing theory.	This study introduces the application of a product diversification strategy in religious-based private schools at the middle school level, an area not widely explored. It provides new insights on how private schools can enhance their appeal and competitiveness.
Flagship programs are supported by facilities such as national-standard science laboratories and modern dormitories	Digital marketing is crucial for increasing school visibility, as indicated by Shields (2018) regarding the importance of social media.	This study emphasizes the importance of integrating digital marketing into the promotion of flagship school programs and introduces a novel integrated marketing strategy, especially for religious-based private schools that are still limited in using digital media.
Majority of prospective students learned about the school not through online media, but through word-of-mouth or by chance.	Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) suggests that there should be alignment between promotional channels to achieve optimal results (Prastowo & Manunggal, 2022).	This study identifies a systemic gap between flagship programs and uncoordinated digital promotion, which reduces marketing effectiveness. The novelty of this research lies in the focus on the importance of synergy between offline and online promotion.
Alumni and community involvement in school promotion is still minimal.	Social capital theory highlights the role of alumni and community networks in strengthening the school's image (Hilendria et al., 2019).	This study introduces the concept of involving alumni and the community in educational promotion, an innovation that can enhance the image and appeal of religious-based private schools. This

		contributes to community-based educational marketing theory.
There is no integrated marketing evaluation mechanism to measure the effectiveness of digital marketing.	Marketing evaluation and control based on data is crucial to measuring strategy effectiveness (Kotler & Keller, 2013).	This study offers novelty by suggesting the importance of an integrated data-based evaluation system for school digital marketing. This would help schools assess success and improve marketing strategies in the future.

Source: Data Analysis, 2024

CONCLUSION

The study on diversification-based marketing strategies at Muhammadiyah Junior High School 8 Mijen Semarang reveals that, in the planning phase, the school has identified local community needs, segmented its market, and developed flagship programs, including the Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS), STEM curriculum, and bilingual classes. However, the market analysis lacks a strong digital component, limiting outreach to broader audiences. During the organizing phase, the marketing team, comprising school leaders, teachers, and public relations staff, faces internal challenges such as uneven workload distribution and limited digital marketing skills, which hinder coordination and promotional efforts. Implementation involves both digital and direct strategies; brochures, banners, and roadshows effectively attract local interest, but social media engagement remains low. New programs like MBS require more intensive promotion. Evaluation is conducted through regular meetings, and brochures are considered practical tools for targeted outreach. However, the absence of comprehensive feedback mechanisms and integrated digital evaluation systems limits the ability to measure program success accurately.

This research is limited to a single case study and may not be generalizable to other schools with different contexts and challenges. To address these limitations, future research is recommended in two areas: the Integration of digital and offline promotion within Islamic education settings. Given the relevance of holistic models in faith-based schools, further exploration is needed on how digital marketing can be strategically aligned with religious activities to shape a superior school image rooted in Islamic values. Additionally, longitudinal studies on the impact of program diversification are warranted. Future research should monitor the long-term effects of educational diversification, particularly the MBS program, on enrollment interest, parental loyalty, and learning outcomes.

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