

The Digital Branding and Positioning Training that Aims to Increase the Number of Student Bodies of SMK Telkom 1 Medan

Moh Faidol Juddi^{1,a)}, Martha Tri Lestari²⁾, Lusy Mukhlisiana²⁾

¹The Communication Science Studies Program, Telkom University, Bandung, Indonesia

²The Department of Digital Public Relations, Telkom University, Bandung, Indonesia

^{a)}Corresponding Author: juddisampoerna@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has limited offline activities, especially the PPDB committees of SMK Telkom 1 Medan, in achieving the target number of student bodies. Strategies for using digital technology are required to assist the PPDB committees in meeting educational targets. Hence, the PKM program initiated by the synergy of lecturers from the Faculty of Communication and Business, Telkom University, which is focused on understanding digital marketing, has been conducted in early to mid-2022 to help the PPDB committees in solving their problems. Various pieces of training to provide understanding related to concepts derived from digital marketing, one of them is digital branding, positioning, and differentiation of educational institutions training, have been given to participants online. This training was conducted in two stages. There were the delivery of material by the lecturers and a one by one coaching conducted in two-way communication, which aims to guide the participants in exploring their problems and finding effective solutions. The PKM program, which was evaluated using a survey, showed that it had answered the needs of the participants significantly in dealing with the problems they faced to increase the number of new students.

Keywords: Community Service, Digital Marketing Training, Covid-19.

INTRODUCTION

Lecturers at Indonesian universities are required to conduct a series of activities in a community service program (PKM) as a dedication to national development (PKM) (Zuriah et al., 2016). This activity is part of the three pillars of higher education (Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi): education, research, and community services, which is intended as an effort to directly share knowledge with the target community to increase the experience of science, technology, and cultural arts through institutional channels (Pangarso, 2019). The community service program conducted by the synergy of lecturers from the Faculty of Communication and Business, Telkom University, is focused on understanding digital marketing concepts in an educational institution to increase the number of new students. Various digital marketing literacy subjects have been provided from February to July 2022, one of which is targeting SMK Telkom 1 Medan, with sub-subjects, one of them being the knowledge development of digital branding, positioning, and differentiation for educational institutions.

The increasing number of educational institutions, especially vocational schools, in Indonesia (Lidwina, 2021), makes educational institutions compete with each other to win the number of student bodies. This condition has challenged them to be more creative in presenting curriculum and educational services through a series of marketing strategies (Fikri, 2020). These relate to structured planning, one of which involves a communication strategy, which focuses on products or services' effective "sales" (Fikri, 2020). These relate to structured planning, one of which involves a communication strategy, which focuses on products or services' effective "sales" (Haqee-Fawzi et al., 2021). In the aim to "sell" educational services, educational institutions need to know their position and how the public perceives them (Atika & Machali, 2018; Juddi & Setianti, 2019) so that communication strategies in marketing institutional services can run effectively (Mukhtar, 2017; Sumarwan & Tjiptonon, 2019). For this reason, the importance of literacy through

a training program to improve marketing skills, especially for the committees for the New Students enrollment (PPDM) of SMK Telkom 1 Bandung.

Currently, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, the PPDB of SMK Telkom 1 Medan committees has found it difficult to attract new students due to limitations in conducting educational program socialization activities due to the government's policy of limiting offline activities. However, demands from institutions related to the target achievement, vision, and mission are still ongoing. An innovative solution is needed for the PPDB committees so that the process of education program socialization in an attempt to improve the student body can continue. Thus, the PKM team of the Faculty of Communication and Business has been conducted to provide the training program to improve the understanding of digital marketing strategies for the PPDB committees, namely the marketing efforts of educational institutions through digital platforms in spreading persuasive messages more massively and quickly. Therefore, with this solution, the PPDB committees can conduct marketing activities effectively.

More specifically, the chances that have been delivered to the PPDB committees of SMK Telkom 1 Medan are assistance in the digital branding strategies and positioning development to meet the target. To draw the school segmentation map, it is necessary to have special assistance carried out on a one-on-one basis so that strategy implementation can be more focused and structured.

METHOD

The stages to help the target community in solving their problems, solutions that have been offered through the literacy training activities to increase understanding and digital marketing skills, using Zoom Meeting and attended by all the PPDB committees of SMK Telkom 1 Medan.

Introduction to The Concept of Digital Branding for Educational Institutions

This activity was guided by a lecturer of the Faculty of Communication and Business, Telkom University, who has the expertise and teaching focus in the field of digital branding, both in theories and concepts related to strategies for communicating messages regarding educational services to parents and the general public online.

Introduction to the concept of positioning and differentiation for educational institutions

The activity, which was guided by a lecturer who is an expert in the field of communication marketing, both in theory and practice, focuses on providing understanding to the PPDB committees, which emphasizes the strategic aspect of understanding the position of the institution's brand in the public's minds and how the public perceives it.

Sharing and one-by-one Coaching Session

At this stage, the lecturers tried to provide special assistance to the PPDB committees after the concept introduction sessions were completed. This stage was provided so that the solutions that have been developed together, between lectures and the participants, can be conducted effectively by directly discussing their problems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service initiated by the synergy of lecturers from the Faculty of Communication and Business, Telkom University, through a series of digital marketing training, has been successfully implemented from February to July 2022. In this training series, various topics, derivatives of the digital marketing concept, have been delivered to the PPDB committees of SMK Telkom 1 Medan, one of which was the topic of digital branding and positioning for educational institutions to increase the number of student bodies which was held on March 28, 2022.

Table 1. The Event Rundown

Time	Duration (Minutes)	Descriptions	PIC	Place
13.45-14.00	15'	Online preparation	PKM teams	Zoom Meeting
14.00-14.05	5'	Opening	MC	Zoom Meeting
14.05-14.08	3'	Photo session	PKM teams	Zoom Meeting
14.08-14.11	3'	Speakers introduction	MC	Zoom Meeting
14.11-15.26	75'	Training session	1. Martha Tri Lestari 2. Lusy Mukhlisiana 3. Moh Faidol Juddi	Zoom Meeting
15.26- end	40'	Sharing, coaching session and closing	Speakers MC	Zoom Meeting

This activity was conducted for approximately three hours. This activity was divided into two stages, which are the training stages (related to the introduction of the concept of digital branding, positioning, and differentiation for educational institutions), sharing, and one-by-one coaching sessions assisted by several students in preparing and directing the process of implementing the training program.

Introduction to The Concept of Digital Branding for Educational Institutions

In this session, the presenters provided knowledge related to strategies for building brand educational institutions by using digital technology. This strategy includes various ways related to choosing the type of content (both for websites and social media), developing digital interactions, experiences and relationships. This strategy was chosen, considering that data on internet usage in Indonesia continues to increase, and on average, most Indonesians spend more than 3 hours a day surfing the internet (Pertwi, 2018). Therefore, digital branding can be an effective option in increasing the positive image of online educational institutions to maintain consistent and continuous educational services (Auladina, 2022; Wheeler, 2017).



Figure 1. The literacy related to digital branding by a Telkom University lecturer

Selection of content (both for websites and social media) is essential to develop a good image of the institution online (Apriananta & Wijaya, 2018). The content is a message, either in the form of articles, images, or videos, in the communication process between the institution and its public to reach a mutual understanding to achieve positive images in the public's mind (Falah & Setiawan, 2022). The selection of this content can be based on content that is intended as an organically processed information medium, namely self-processed (images or amateur videos, either from teachers, students, or guardians) and educational content that is processed through

an attractive graphic design process. On the other hand, digital content can also be in interactive quizzes, live on social media, Q&A devices, and other two-way content that can build engagement between institutions and their public. Alumni profiles, and student and parent testimonials can also be displayed regularly on social media and the school's website feature.

Introduction to the concept of positioning and differentiation for educational institutions

Before determining the brand strategy, educational institutions need to understand their position and segmentation (Faizin, 2017). Segmentation can be conducted to classify the target audience based on region, student interests, motivation, educational background, and parents' income, guarantees, and facilities (Atika & Machali, 2018). From mapping the image of educational institutions through a series of positioning and segmenting, institutions can develop a differentiation strategy to highlight the characteristics of the school compared to other similar schools (Wati & Murtadlo, 2021).



Figure 2. The literacy related to positioning and differentiation for educational institutions by a Telkom University lecturer

Educational institution competitions to win the number of student bodies are getting tougher. This differentiation strategy can be emphasized in educational services, including through a curriculum that adopts international standards, excellent accreditation, the number of branches covering several regions nationally, international cooperation, school facilities that support the improvement of student skills, good relations with parents and stakeholders, and others. With this differentiation strategy, educational institutions could build a unique identity that is not owned by other educational institutions so that schools can win the market successfully.

Sharing and one-by-one coaching session

After the training session was completed, the next agenda was sharing session by the participants, the PPDB committees, to the presenters. This activity took place in two directions, starting with the participants conveying the obstacles they faced during their efforts to recruit new students through socialization and promotions, both online and offline. During this session, the presenters tried to listen carefully to the obstacles presented by the participants, then tried to find solutions through a process of further exploration with questions and answers (Lailam et al., 2021) aimed at solving common problems without being patronizing (Casero-Ripollés et al., 2016; Curtis et al., 2011; Järvinen, 2018; Juddi et al., 2021).

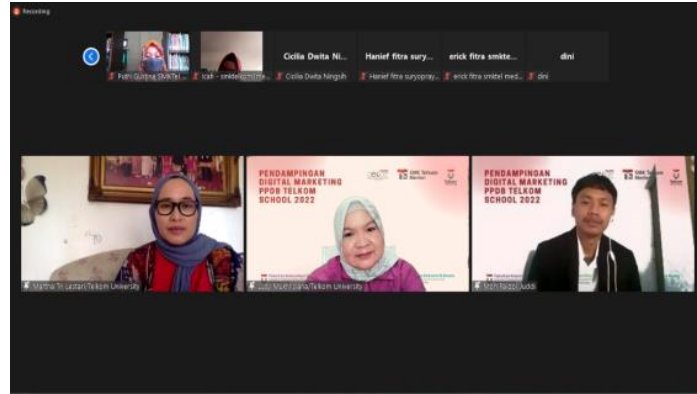


Figure 3. The sharing and one-by-one coaching session

After the PKM program was finished, the program evaluation was measured through a questionnaire to see feedback from participants related to the training program. From the questionnaires, it showed that the program, through digital branding and positioning training for educational institutions, significantly, is in meeting with the needs of participants (score 98%), both in terms of implementation time, media selection (Zoom meeting), answering the needs of participants, friendliness, speed and accuracy of the speakers in providing solutions to their problems.

Table 2. The feedback questionnaire result

Important Factors	The amount of Each Emphasized Factor			
	Strongly Not Agree	Not Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. This activity is in accordance with the purpose of the activity itself			10	13
2. This activity is in accordance with the needs target community		2	9	12
3. The implementation time of this activity is relatively sufficient as needed			10	13
4. Telkom University lecturers and students be friendly, fast and responsive help during activities			6	17
5. The local community accepts and expects Telkom University's current activities and the future			7	16
Total	0	2	123	170
% (Amount of each:total)	0	2	49,2%	48,8%
Total % agree and strongly agree			98%	

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The incline of competition from educational institutions in recruiting new students, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, requires educational institutions to have effective strategies for winning the market. In the current uncertain situation, where all forms of offline activities are restricted, digital branding and positioning are the strategies that can be used by educational institutions in mapping market positions and segments as well as forming brand strategies to

develop a positive image virtually, through websites and social media, to win the market, especially in the education sectors. Therefore, the synergy of lecturers from the Faculty of Communication and Business, Telkom University, initiated a series of activities in the PKM program, one of which focused on digital branding and positioning training, to the PPDB committees of SMK Telkom 1 Bandung. This online activity has been conducted in two stages, which were literacy and sharing (one-by-one coaching). The delivery of concepts was aimed to increase the participants' understanding related of digital branding and positioning concepts. In addition, the sharing session was conducted in two directions aimed to assist the participants in exploring and presenting appropriate solutions to their problems. And then, the evaluation results through a feedback questionnaire showed that the training activities had significantly answered the needs of the participants, particularly by increasing the number of new students through digital branding and positioning. In the future, hopefully, this activity can be conducted continuously and simultaneously so that the solutions that have been built can be evaluated and the understanding of participants related to digital marketing continues to increase.

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