PROMOTION MIX NAHDLATUL ULAMA UNIVERSITY OF SURABAYA TO INCREASE NEW STUDENT'S INTEREST

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Abstract:

The mushrooming number of PTKI (Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam - Islamic Religious Higher Education) clusters has made competition between universities even tighter, thus using promotional strategies to increase public trust. The increase in the interest of new students is an indicator of the success of the college in marketing education. This research is devoted to UNUSA as an Islamic organization-based PTKI (NU) that carries out promotional strategies to increase the interest of new students. This research uses a qualitative case study approach. The results showed that UNUSA used a promotion mix through advertising, such as; national television, personal selling, publications, and direct marketing. UNUSA's branding as PTNU (Nahdlatul Ulama' College) using a promotion mix has implications for increasing the number of new students by 21% over the last five years with a total achievement of 6,035 new students from 49% of the Nahdliyin community segment.

Keywords: *Promotion*, *Higher Education*, *Nahdlatul 'Ulama'*, *Promotion Mix*, *Student Interest*

Abstrak:

Menjamurnya jumlah kluster PTKI (Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam) saat ini menjadikan persaingan antar perguruan tinggi semakin ketat dengan berbagai cara melakukan strategi untuk meningkatkan kepercayaan masyarakat (*trust*). Peningkatan animo mahasiswa baru merupakan indiktor keberhasilan perguruan dalam melakukan pemasaran pendidikan. Penelitian ini difokuskan pada UNUSA sebagai PTKI berbasis ormas Islam (NU) yang melakukan strategi promosi untuk meningkatkan animo mahasiswa baru. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif jenis studi kasus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa UNUSA menggunakan *promotion mix* melalui periklanan, seperti; televisi nasional, *personal selling*, publikasi dan *direct marketing*. Branding UNUSA sebagai PTNU (Perguruan Tinggi Nahdlatul'Ulama') menggunakan *promotion mix* berimplikasi pada target peningkatan jumlah mahasiswa bari sebanyak 21% selama kurun lima tahun terakhir dengan total pencapaian 6.035 mahasiswa baru dari sejumlah 49% segmen warga *nahdliyin*.

Kata Kunci: *Promosi*, *Perguruan Tinggi*, *Nahdlatul 'Ulama'*, *Promotion Mix*, *Animo Mahasiswa*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is a center for the development of science throughout establishing the first university in the world, namely in Morocco in the ninth century (Burnes, Wend, & By, 2014). Higher education is also a center for research and community service that contributes to building the progress of human civilization to date (Levkoe et al., 2020; Salam et al., 2019) The three functions of higher education in the Indonesian context are known as the Tri Dharma of Higher Education to produce better quality education (Erlangga, 2019; Hamzah et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, the number of universities is increasing. Based on the April 2021 recapitulation from the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education, the number of state universities is 4,606, with 289,711 lecturers and 8,744,489 students (PDDikti, 2021). From this number, it can be seen that the phenomenon of increasingly fierce competition in universities has strengthened. PTN (State Universities) compete with PTS (Private Universities), plus the PTKI (Islamic Religious Universities) cluster comprising PTKIN (State Islamic Religious Universities) must contend with PTKIS (Private Islamic Religious Universities). Moreover, PTKIS problems that always occur are related to monetary funds, human resources, facilities and infrastructure, management and administration, and the institution's image. The changing conditions of the times that are so fast and dynamic have also changed consumer tastes in the education sector which requires the best quality to teach, research, community service, and university graduates. This reality has given rise to a new paradigm in higher education, namely business competition in the higher education industry that is so tight (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016; Raya, 2016; Kretovics et al., 2019) . The competition between universities forces them to use various means, including promotional strategies, to establish long-term relationships with education customers to maintain sustainable competition (Rosyidah et al, 2020; Harwood & Murray, 2019; Raassens & Haans, 2017).

The five competitive forces offered by Michael Porter, such as Threat of Substitute Product, Threat of New Entrants, Competitive Rivalry, Bargaining Power of Suppliers, Bargaining Power of Customers, make universities a business development strategy analyzed by industry (Porter, 1997). By using the concept of business and industry, universities can compete in the education market competitively to attract higher education customers comprising the public; students, parents, and stakeholders in particular as users of higher education services (Gravett et al., 2020). It sounds taboo if a university is an educational institution to apply business and industry to win the competition. Still, at least the marketing of PTKI has given rise to an alternative model of managing a religious-based university (Raya, 2019). Promotional activities at PTKI need to get a more in-depth technical study in the field. The measure of success in attracting public interest to PTKI is more manageable.

Promotion in education has a vital role in the sustainability of higher education. In globalization, universities are required to compete (competitiveness) in providing satisfactory educational services to the community; if not so, then universities will slowly experience a decrease in

interest in the public interest which will affect higher education income (Muskens et al., 2019). Providing satisfactory educational services is a strategy to gain trust from the community, increasing the public's interest in higher education.

The efforts made by PTNU such as UNUSA to compete with its "rival" Muhammadiyah. The proliferation of Muhammadiyah Educational Institutions as the basis for the strength of this mass organization in education is a competitive rivalry from Porter's elements which PTNU should consider as the basis for the resilience of NU in the development of higher education. PTNU has gained the competitiveness to gain trust from the community in various ways, including conducting a promotional "boom" so the wider community knows UNUSA. Promotion strategies at universities are the "spearhead" to disseminate this institution to a broad audience (Mazon et al., 2020). Promotion is an effort to "brand" universities to get a "name" in society (Veletsianos et al., 2017).

Several studies on the promotion of higher education to increase the interest of entering new students, among others. First, Laserna and Miguel's research on Facebook and Twitter social media as promotional media to attract students to college (Laserna & Miguel, 2018). T Mazon conducted the latest 2020 research on promotion as sustainable development for universities. Advertising plays an important role and strategy in maximizing social and economic functions on a hands-on basis. The findings of this study show that promotions that are currently developing are only top down. The third research conducted by Bennett and Khanna on the rise of study majoring in Anthropology is much needed in public and private sector institutions. Still, it does not get accurate information about their job opportunities and careers in Anthropology. Therefore, the recommendation of this research promotion becomes a central factor in integrating specialization studies with career opportunities (Bennett & Khanna, 2010).

The following research is from Raya, which discusses the marketing of Islamic education in universities under two large Islamic organizations (Ormas), namely Muhammadiyah and NU. The results got in this study are that promotion as one tool in marketing PTKI has brought significant changes to the public interest and the image of universities (Raya, 2019). And subsequent research as reinforcement from (Hulleman et al., 2017) that the promotion strategy is fundamental for what information customers need for educational services, one of which is information related to the development of student interests under the majors taken at universities with job opportunities in the business world.

The various studies above show that the promotion strategy is an absolute thing that must be carried out by universities, especially PTKI based on Islamic organizations such as UNUSA, in developing increasingly competitive and fast universities. As one of the PTNU, UNUSA intensively collaborates with the Executive Board of Nahdlatul Ulama' (PBNU) so that promotional activities among "nahdliyin" get a sympathetic response. They are known as PTKI, which has two hospitals, namely RS. Islam Jemursari Surabaya

and RS. Islam A. Yani Surabaya and campus activities that are always covered by the media, such as TV9, which is very well known by the public, UNUSA has a strong branding in promoting Aswaja-based universities.

This article discusses the promotion strategy carried out by UNUSA Surabaya as a university under the auspices of a major Islamic organization, namely NU, to increase the number of new students. This article focuses on the first, marketing as a corporate strategy adopted for universities to increase competitiveness and public trust. Second, the Department of Public Relations and Marketing is the party that promotes UNUSA to the public. Third, advertising, personal selling, publicity and PR, sales promotion, and direct marketing as promotional mix tools to quickly gain trust from the crowd. Third, NU residents as a segment of society and Islamic boarding schools and madrasas/schools as UNUSA's targets in promoting higher education. From year to year, there has been a high spike in new students since UNUSA used a marketing strategy with its promotions. This is interesting because Muslim scholars have not widely studied studies on the rise of PTKI based on Islamic organizations. It becomes a novelty in the development of religious research and Islamic education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm with a case study design. The locus studied in this study was UNUSA Surabaya. In this study, the position of the researcher as the chief instrument in data collection, as stated by Sugiyono that the researcher is the key instrument that determines the level of validity and representation of the object being studied (2011). As a critical instrument, researchers are the primary goal in extracting data, so the role of researchers as the "main actor" serves as planners, implementers, data collectors, and research reporters.

The data was collected through in-depth interviews with the section who studied PR and promotion at UNUSA, in this case, focused on the Head of Public Relations and Marketing, Head of LP2M Division, Head of New Student Admissions, and students as education customers. The four data sources as critical informants are equipped with several documents from the Public Relations and Marketing section and the new student admissions section to get secondary data supporting the primary data. The data were analyzed using Miles Hubermen's analysis with a three-stage process, namely data reduction, data verification, and checking the data's validity to conclude (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Along with interviews, researchers also conducted data mining using observations as data reinforcement about what activities UNUSA carried out in promoting higher education. From September 25, 2019, to September 22, 2020, the researchers conducted data confirmation from the research results by triangulation of sources to related parties as a process to get reliable data credibility.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
UNUSA Marketing Communication

To "boost" the public perception of UNUSA as a community reference university, strategic steps are needed so that universities and the community can be integrated, so marketing communication is the right choice for UNUSA to bridge the gap. Marketing communication as a college brand personality identity attracts public interest (Rutter, Lettice, & Nadeau, 2017). In global competition, the existence of universities should not be static and traditional (Zhao & Ferran, 2016). Muhammad Ghafirin (2020), as the Head of Public Relations and Marketing, stated that:

> "Nahdliyin residents of the East Java region who are still not very familiar with UNUSA as a reference university based on Aswaja (*Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*). We create various channels for promotional activities, such as traditional banners and brochures, modern ones such as social media. The activities we cover are related to UNUSA events in the organisation of higher education and the advantages of campuses such as providing full scholarships to Nahdliyin residents, appreciation scholarships, boarding school partnership scholarships, and ease of administrative services such as one day service starting from new student registration to accepted by college only one day"

Using technology, communication, and information devices in this era is a powerful way to promote higher education to a broad audience. As a marketing communication instrument, social media bridges universities and the community so that they are integrated. Social media platforms designed for social interaction, communication, and marketing are growing. Higher education institutions such as UNUSA are showing interest in the potential of social media as a marketing tool. Social media tries to provide accurate information to prospective new students and parents to choose study programs, majors, scholarship programs, and even selecting universities (Constantinides et al., 2011). Chair of the Institute for Research and Community Service (LP2M) UNUSA, Mr. Muhit (2020) said that:

> "For a long time, UNUSA has used technology and mass media as marketing communication tools with nahdliyin residents such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, as well as electronic media such as TV9 and print media such as NU magazines such as the Hall, Minutes, and UNUSA magazines"

Figure 1: TV9 as UNUSA's promotional media to *nahdliyin*

Based on research conducted by James-MacEachern and Yun, it was revealed that international students consider the campus website as the most widely used source of information by prospective new students in deciding about choosing colleges and study programs of interest compared to personal communication such as coming directly to campus (James-MacEachern et al., 2017). What is done by UNUSA with one day service, starting from registration of new students to being accepted by universities in just one day is a strategic step so that prospective new students immediately make their decision to choose a college? Even Muhammad Ghafirin said: "This is a new strategy that we are doing, and UNUSA is the only university in Indonesia that applies this method" (Ghafirin, 2020). As research conducted by Galotti et al., (2006) explained that the existence of study orientation factors, the tendency of career plans, and the ease of information in obtaining a college profile are things that universities should consider in choosing promotion strategies that are targeted and efficient.

PR and Marketing as UNUSA Promoters

UNUSA involves related parties who serve as promoter agents to socialize UNUSA to the public in promoting higher education. In fact, according to Marine's research, the role of promoters in universities occupies a strategic position. Eleven universities in Zimbabwe, which are less developed regions, have maximized advocates for universities, and they must have a strategic role in the university business arena (Maringe, 2006). The parties who act as promoters at UNUSA include;

First, the field of PR and Marketing. This division was directly inaugurated by the Rector and carried out the functions, duties, and responsibilities under Vice-Rector I to market and inform the broader community of UNUSA's most favorite university of choice in East Java in particular and throughout Indonesia. This division is also tasked with conveying the Institution's Vision, Mission, and policies to become an attraction

for the wider community to change knowledge at UNUSA. This division takes on two roles: liaison between universities and the community. The parties that have collaborated with UNUSA are pesantren, study groups, NU institutions at the central and regional levels, companies, and the government. As a promoter which provides detailed and representative information about universities through various social media such as YouTube (UNUSA Official), Instagram (@humasunusa), Facebook (UNUSA PR), Twitter (@humasunusa). Meanwhile, in electronic media, UNUSA collaborates with several national television stations to socialize UNUSA to the public, such as TV9, Metro TV, TVRI, MNC TV, and Trans TV.

The second, the LP2M field. This institution is engaged in research and community service that bridges between the community, mass organizations, and the government (both provincial, city, and village governments) to develop research and community service like what was done in KKN and PKL activities where students went directly to the community and blended in with their lives for a specified time—sending these students to various regions in Indonesia. Indirectly, students deployed by the campus through the LP2M division at least have a mission to promote UNUSA to the community. Students as word-of-mouth agents who indirectly visualize UNUSA's academic life to the public. Word of mouth is a promotional technique that indirectly strengthens public confidence in messages received through social media (Consiglio et al., 2018). Although its role is not as major as the Public Relations and Marketing division, the programs that have been carried out by students based on the direction of LP2M in the target areas are material to convince the public that universities are worthy of being chosen as a reference for deciding to choose universities.

Third, the New Student Admissions (PMB), which is to accept new students both online and offline—in this division, managing the one day service, which is the leading and fastest icon of UNUSA in the process of new student admissions. With this service, prospective students go through the registration process, complete files, entrance tests until the announcement of recent student graduation only takes one day. This division seems to have provided accessible services for prospective students to choose UNUSA as the university of choice. As stated by Any Rovikotul Aliyah, a student of the Undergraduate Nutrition Program at the Faculty of Health, UNUSA, said that: "With the one day service, prospective students do not need to bother registering for months to wait for graduation announcements, not to mention if prospective students do not meet the requirements outlined in this article. They were requested by the university" (2020).

Promotion Mix as a Tool to Attract New Students

A promotion mix or better known as the promotion mix is a promotional effort using the 5Ps. The 5P elements include Advertising, Personal Selling, publicity, public relations, sales promotion, and Direct Marketing (Wahyudi & Melinda, 2018). The phenomenon of marketing in educational institutions has made several universities make breakthroughs to quickly gain the public's trust by building an image through promotion.

However, Pantano added an element in the promotion mix, namely social media. These findings assume that internet-based social media has now become a trend for humans to communicate with hundreds or even thousands of other people, thus forming a large community in interpersonal and inter-community interactions so that if used for promotional activities, it will have a massive impact on institutions (Pantano et al., 2019). Based on direct information from the head of Public Relations and Marketing, Mr Ghafirin (2020) said that:

> "The promotional mix carried out by UNUSA is advertising such as on TV9 television, Metro TV, TVRI, MNC TV, Trans TV; then PS (or personal selling) and where the PR and Marketing team as a "sales promotion" will promote to several pesantren and schools or madrasas in East Java and face to face introducing UNUSA with students and students. UNUSA also uses publicity and direct marketing through the website and several social media such as Instagram (account: @humasunusa), Facebook (account: UNUSA Humas), YouTube (account: UNUSA Official), Instagram and Twitter (account: @humasunusa). Using the six elements of the promotional mix is aimed at making the public more familiar with UNUSA and interested in becoming part of the campus community".

Promotional attacks using social media are a powerful and efficient way to target what universities want to achieve in marketing universities (He, Murphy, & Luo, 2016; Pringle & Fritz, 2019). In the advertising section, UNUSA uses television by Newman and Levine's findings that television is a converged medium where people spend more of their time watching broadcasts on television. News published on television will be easier for someone to digest than in magazines, so legitimacy as a mass media is more trusted than in other print and electronic media. This legitimacy is because of television branding as a reliable promotional tool. Advertisements that are "embedded" in several official TV9 programs often display information related to UNUSA to remind the public about UNUSA. Line ads embedded on television seem to have also become a separate trend where the development of social media and the massive television program has combined the two using the technique of embedding line ads. This is very effective in reminding the public about college.

The chair of LP2M UNUSA, Mr. Muhit (2020), said that: "UNUSA has previously launched the promotion strategy using the promotion mix by using all technology, information and communication tools." For example, marketing through the website, then all activities related to academic and non-academic are covered on the website https://unusa.ac.id/ existing programs can be downloaded by anyone and anytime (Rosyidah et al., 2020). How many people visit the website, as much as the website as a promotional medium, has attracted public interest, even though only reading and seeing the information on the website. Even university ranking agencies worldwide are measured through visits to their respective campus websites using the Webometrics ranking. The components used by Webometrics to rank universities include

50% visibility which has an impact from external links, 50% activity in which there is a 20% presence calculated from the number of visiting site domain pages, 20% openness calculated from the number of publications. Scientific publications from Google Scholar and 10% excellence is calculated from the number of scientific journals from Elsevier (Sarwar et al., 2021; Vásquez, Luna-Cardozo et al., 2020).

Promotion Strategy for Achieving Community Segments and Targets

The promotion strategy aims to achieve a specific target and segment in the marketing concept, which is the target object (Davari, Noursalehi, & Keramati, 2019). The intended target is a market where a group of customers or consumers is a marketing resource. In education, the market is a set of educational customers who are the object or target. Education customers are none other than the community itself, starting from prospective new students, parents, stakeholders (government, companies, and donor institutions), and community groups such as Islamic organizations (Budd, 2017; Calma & Dickson-Deane, 2020). Consumers or education customers usually have the same characteristics in terms of age, region, income, class, social strata, or lifestyle level that are most in need of educational services from higher education.

The selection of targets and segments of society is the most crucial thing in marketing. If the target is not on target, the promotion results will not have much impact on the university. The target and market segment choice depends on the marketer's judgment (Carter & Yeo, 2017). Here, those who act at UNUSA are the Public Relations and Marketing departments as the most strategic and representative parties to assess what segments of society will be the promotion targets. Based on an interview with the Head of Public Relations and Marketing (2020), said:

> "Our aim is promoting is to target a clear market segment, namely the NU Islamic organization which has established a good cooperative relationship with UNUSA. These segments include Islamic boarding schools and schools or madrasas on the islands of Java and Madura, which are grouped based on origin from SMA, MA, and SMK. The second segment of the NU Muslim Muslim congregation which has brought UNUSA success so far is known through this jami'ah, because almost 90% of new students are from the nahdliyin circle"

In Nilan's (2009) findings, during the last two decades, university graduates have rarely been interested in pesantren, and pesantren graduates are also rarely interested in continuing their studies to higher education. Various accompanying factors such as pesantren graduates lack general skills and more on religious knowledge so that the requirements are less compatible with an increasingly competitive job market. Second, pesantren graduates are not interested in continuing their education; they are more interested in developing religious education into ustadz, preacher, and establishing new pesantren. Third, no regulation regulates universities requiring pesantren graduates as an essential requirement that prospective new students must

possess.

Table 1: UNUSA New Student Acquisition Estimate
since Using Promotion Mix

No	Academic Year	Number of Students	Percentage
1	2016/2017	1.260	
2	2017/2018	1.475	21%
3	2018/2019	1.550	7%
4	2019/2020	1.750	20%
	Total	**6.035**	

According to the Head of Public Relations and Marketing (2020), the achievement of this amount is an expected achievement from the targets previously planned by the Public Relations and Marketing team. They have worked professionally and are highly dedicated to higher education. UNUSA, as a university that carries the identity of an NU mass organization, is an essential differentiation in attracting the community's interest, which most of the Indonesian population is affiliated with NU. Data from the Indonesian Survey Circle (LSI) survey agency Denny JA which was released on 18-25 February 2020, shows that NU is the Islamic organization with the most followers (49.5%), beating Muhammadiyah, which is the "brother" Islamic organization that was founded earlier than NU, had to settle for second place with a very far percentage of 4.3%—following the third-place combined with 1.3% Islamic organizations, and fourth place with the 212 Alumni Association Islamic organizations which amounted to 0.7%, followed by FPI (Islamic Defenders Front) with 0.4%. Seeing many nahdliyin market segments, this is an excellent opportunity for UNUSA to increase its promotional targets to achieve even more intensive ones. The moderate view of NU as a representative mass organization is the umbrella for Indonesian people who support Islam Wasaṭiyyah (Hilmy, 2013; Tahir & Oziev, 2020). If NU is supported by Kiai, who are figures followed and imitated by the community, this organization has many member segments. The development of higher education promotions with the Islamic mass organization segment is interesting to be studied in further research to add to the treasures and significant contribution to Islamic-based higher education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

UNUSA is one of the PTKI that is aggressively carrying out higher education promotion strategies to increase public trust and interest in prospective new students. By differentiation as a university-based on the most prominent Islamic mass organization in Indonesia, namely NU, UNUSA reads this as an opportunity to carry out a promotional strategy with the nahdliyin community group segment, mainly from the pesantren. By using the promotion

mix, UNUSA targets promotions on social, print, and electronic media to increase the electability of higher education in the public's eyes. UNUSA's breakthrough in promoting has increased the number of public interest by 21%, with a total achievement of 6,035 new students in the last five years. A large number of nahdliyin residents, as much as 49% of the real followers of other Islamic organizations, makes this an excellent opportunity for education promotion that still needs to be improved in further research.

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